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LOVE'S CONFLICT.

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT.

"He jests at scars, who never felt a wound."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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Dedicated

TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER,

CAPTAIN FREDERICK MARRYAT,

R.N., C.B., F.R.S.

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LOVE'S CONFLICT.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE SANDS.

ON the Kentish coast, not many miles from Dover, there lies a little fishing hamlet, an insignificant little place, whose whole glory and honour consists in supplying its more fashionable neighbours with the luxury of fresh fish, and whose residents are quite content if, by such supply, they can keep themselves in food and clothing. A few irregular rocks, a broad belt of white sand, over which the creaming waves run smoothly, with a whispered music, a regiment of fishing-boats, with all their paraphernalia of crab-baskets, shrimping-nets, and night-lines, half-a-dozen fishers' huts, built of old boats, small, smoky, and intensely unpleasant,—this was pretty nearly all that Chelton Marsh could boast of. Yet,

in point of natural advantages, it was as rich a hamlet as many of its betters ; but it was not fashionable, and therefore its advantages remained undiscovered, and probably will do so to all time, for the owner of Chelton Marsh and its surroundings is a wealthy man, who will not part with his land on any terms, and steadfastly resists all the fascinations of hotel and lodging-house builders.

Standing back from the beach, and yet close to it, on the sides of a green slope which constitutes part of one of the famed Kentish hills, there stood a small farmhouse, though the only claim it had to that name was that its owner, Jacob Willis, farmed in a very small way of his own. The name of farmhouse throws our thoughts back to large, rambling, country-built places, covered with pear-trees or grape-vines, with barns, and cow-houses, and piggeries adjacent, and standing in well-stocked gardens. But I am afraid Jacob Willis's property could hardly boast of all this. It was a better sort of cottage, built of wood, with whitewashed walls and brick floors inside, and a straight slip of garden in front, in which pinks and marigolds, and such-like common flowers, grew beneath the shade of gooseberry and currant bushes. The farmyard lay at the back of the house, where a few cows and pigs disported themselves in a paddock,

and occasionally in a scamper over the Kentish hills, in company with a shaggy pony, who, with his appendage in the shape of a cart, was much in request to carry fish to the more distant towns. Yet, in the eyes of Chelton Marsh, Jacob Willis was Farmer Willis, and his property was the Farm Cottage; and Chelton Marsh was never known to err, especially in its own opinion.

On a bright morning in August, some ten years ago, the sun was shining too much to be pleasant into the little front parlour of the Farm Cottage, and making the inmates, who were engaged in ironing, look very hot and flushed over their occupation. They consisted of a middle-aged woman (Mrs. Willis herself), whose thin, almost bent, figure told of delicate health for her class of life, and a young, strongly-built girl, who, if she were her daughter, bore little resemblance to her. There was another woman, sitting near the open door for coolness, who now looked up from her knitting to address a young urchin of some seven or eight years old, who came running up the narrow garden-path.

"What ails you, Charlie?" she said, in her strong Kentish dialect; "where have you been? You look as if you'd roasted yourself in the sun."

"I've only come from the sands, Mrs. Cornish," he answered. "There's strangers along there!"

"Strangers? where, Charlie?" exclaimed the girl, resting her iron on the linen she was engaged in pressing, and scorching it.

"Along the sands," answered Charlie. "Didn't I tell you, Nell, afore? Two on 'em, gentlemen—London chaps, may be. They chucked me a shilling," added the child, as he caught up a pebble from the garden-path, and shied it in the direction of the beach.

"Look what you're after, Nell!" exclaimed Mrs. Willis, anxiously; "you've scorched that sheet, girl. What's the strangers to you?"

"Nought that I know of" answered the girl; "but I'm sick of ironing; I shall go and have a turn along the hill."

And as she spoke she put down the irons, and prepared to leave the room.

"You're never going to leave me all this work to do, Nell?" exclaimed the woman, earnestly, "there's more than enough for two hands, and it must be cleared off to-night."

"Then I must do it after dark," was the reply, "for I am sick for the air now." And Nell disappeared through the open door, and down the garden.

"Nell's making straight for the sands, I bet," said

young Charlie, with glee ; " it's none of the hill she's wanting this afternoon."

" Come, run along with her, my lad," said his mother, " you're getting a man, you must look after your sister, Charlie," and so dismissed him.

" Well, how ever I'm to get through this I can't tell," was her exclamation as she sank down in a chair ; " I feel that tired already, Mrs. Cornish, and so faint ; I wasn't fit for the work when I begun ; the weather's almost past bearing for heat, when it's joined to ironing all day."

" Lor ! Mrs. Willis," said the woman she addressed, " what did you go to let that gal run off in that style for ? lazy hussy as she is, she thinks of nothing but running after the men folks ; you should have kept her by you ; but there ! you spoil her, if ever mother did, and she not your own ; it's past me !"

" Well, if she ain't my own," said Mrs. Willis, almost forgetting the work before her in the prospect of an argument with her neighbour, " she's next door to it, and I couldn't love her more ; nor I don't think I should have loved a daughter of my own so much, neither, as Nell, because she came to me at a time when my heart was very sore, and since she's been left on my hands, I've had pity as well as love for the dear lass. It's twenty years next Christmas since

I first had her—time enough to love her, neighbour.”

Mrs. Cornish had, in common with all the inhabitants of Chelton Marsh, heard the story which she felt was coming, over and over again, but she made one final effort to stop the stream, though in vain.

“Oh, yes! Mrs. Willis, we all know how you care for the girl, and why; it’s a sad story, we all know it,” she added, with a shake of her head.

“You know the story well, Mrs. Cornish, but you can’t never know—no one can—what I felt for that gal from the first day I had her. There I was, a young critter, just married, as you may say; my baby, to whom I had looked forward, as mothers will, only born to be buried, and my man away—as he used to be then for weeks together—with the fishing smacks. Lor! I was that lonely and miserable, Mrs. Cornish, I would have talked to a dog for company; and when there came a lady, as looked like a lady, and promised me so much, and so much for to dry-nurse a six-month-old baby for her, why, I jumped at the offer, and looked on my Nell from that time almost as my own, somewhat like I might have done on the little one as lies in the churchyard.”

“Ah! you didn’t think as she’d be left on you for life,” was her neighbour’s comment on her story.

"No, I didn't, Mrs. Cornish; and at first, when the money failed, we took it to heart, I don't deny that—not on account of the dear child, for it had broke our hearts to part with her at any time, but because we felt we was cheated, and no one likes that; but we soon forgot it; and as the time went on, and we heard nothing of her friends, we felt almost glad it was so; and if my Charlie hadn't been born so unexpected, Nell would have been cared for as an only child, till this day. My only worry is to think she's had no education, for, being a lady, she ought to have had it. But, lor! she'll never be claimed now. If I thought she would be, it would kill me."

"You'd get over it, Mrs. Willis, like others," was Mrs. Cornish's matter-of-fact reply, "you've got your Charlie, and a fine lad of his years too."

"I know that," said Mrs. Willis, simply; "but I don't think I could part with my Nell."

"Well, John Read will take her away from you before long, I reckon," said Mrs. Cornish.

"John Read!" said her neighbour, firing up, "why, who couples her along of John Read?"

"Why, they're always together, keeping company, and sure he's good enough for any gal hereabouts."

"Any gal hereabouts! I'd have John Read to remember, and you too, neighbour Cornish, that

my Nell's a lady, and may be a grand lady, which will have her rights, please God, some day. She's for none like John Read, fine fellow though he be."

"Ah, and you may say that," was the answer, "for a better lad don't draw net. The way he keeps that helpless mother of his is a sight. He'd make a good man to any gal, lady or not."

"Maybe, maybe," said Mrs. Willis, thoughtfully. "I don't say nought against him, but he ain't for such as my Nell, that's all."

Mrs. Cornish held her tongue like a wise woman, but she knew pretty well, with the rest of Chelton Marsh, that if John Read was not for Nell Willis, the man who ought to have her didn't live. In the meanwhile, the subject of their conversation was making her way, as her foster-brother had predicted, to the beach. She was a tall, well-made girl, more handsome than pretty, in the face. There was much to admire in the dark eyes and hair, which harmonized so well with the ruddy red and white of her complexion, and in the shape of her hands and feet, which the rough work she was accustomed to do marred, but could not obliterate. There was much, I say, to admire in all this, but there was nothing to love; at all events, at first sight. There was a haughty self-satisfaction visible in the looks and

attitude of the whole figure, rustic though it appeared, which would induce an observer to turn his head aside, lest he should add, by his too apparent admiration, to the conceit pictured in the face before him. As she passed down the little garden-path she picked a few flowers, a pink or two, a marigold, and a common rose, and placed them in her bosom. If you could have read her thoughts then, you would have seen what an arrant coquette she was, for as she left the cottage behind her, she twitched off the handkerchief she wore about her neck and throat, leaving them and part of her bosom—firm and plump, though tanned by exposure to the sun—bare. Then she took off her clumsy shoes, stockings she never wore, and left them where she knew they would be safe, untied the coarse black string which confined her thick hair in a rude knot at the back of her head, and shook it down luxuriantly over her shoulders; and as she stepped upon the sands, still wet and glistening from the late receding tide, she caught up a bunch of seaweeds, common stuff enough, red, and green, and white, but uncommonly becoming, as she wreathed it about her dark tresses. She looked up and down the sands to see whereabouts the strange gentlemen might be, and descrying their figures at some little distance, smoking and recumbent, com-

menced a tardy, unconscious-looking walk towards them. At first they were too busy talking to perceive her approach. As they lay there, side by side upon the sands, they looked the very opposite of one another. The younger of the two was a man of perhaps five or six and twenty. Rather above the middle height, with a graceful figure and good features, he was decidedly handsome; but there was a sinister look in his dark eyes, and a compression about his thin lips, which told an acute observer of physiognomy that his mind was small, whatever his stature, and that he did not possess the most honest heart, or the most liberal ideas in the world. His companion might have been about forty-five or fifty, but his age is of little moment; his hair was grey, and his face bore the traces of an acute and observant disposition; he was a lawyer, and he looked his profession all over.

"This doesn't seem a very likely place, Ryder," observed the younger man, after a long pause. "What do you propose to do?"

"It certainly does not," returned his companion, "but we must not leave it, Mr. Treherne, before we have instituted the proper inquiries. They will not take long, for there do not seem to be more than a dozen families hereabouts."

"The people, whoever they were, whom the child was left with, may have removed ages ago."

"Nothing more likely, sir, or Mdle. du Broissart may have died in the interim; but, in either case, we must assure ourselves of the fact."

"Jolly good thing for George if she has," remarked William Treherne.

"It would be very fortunate, sir, very fortunate," answered the lawyer. "I hope it may be so. I am not sure of this being the place, after all. In the late Mdme. du Broissart's deposition regarding it, I find the name spelled Chalton Marsh. Now this village is called Chelton Marsh, and I hear there is a Charlton Marsh some twenty miles distant. We may have to extend our journey."

"I don't care if we do," answered Treherne; "it's first-rate weather for travelling. I'm glad I accepted the job. George was a muff not to come himself."

"Mr. George Treherne naturally felt a delicacy in the matter," said Mr. Ryder; "he could scarcely have been expected to welcome the heiress, if we find her."

"No, hang it! I hope she's dead and buried. There's a fine girl, Ryder. By Jove, what a vixen! She has given that little one something to remember her by."

Charlie had followed Nell, as his mother had bidden him, to the beach, and joined her soon after the last arrangements of her toilet were completed. The girl did not want his company; she tried to get rid of the child.

"Go your way, Charlie," she said; "I've no need of you. I want to be alone."

"Mother said as I was to come along with you," was the boy's answer. Why, what a swell you've come out, Nell! What have you been doing to your hair?"

"Never you mind," was her reply. "Boys shouldn't ask questions. Come, go your way with the other children. I've no need of you."

But Charlie stood his ground.

"What do you want to get rid of me for?" he asked; "and why are you here? I thought you was off to the hills for the air."

And he laughed saucily. The laugh roused her.

"What business have you to think anything about me?" she demanded, angrily. "Go to your mother, now. I'll have no children bothering after me. Do you hear?"

"I hear," answered the boy, "but I'm not a going for such as you. Mother said I was to look after you."

"You're only going to try and get speech of them chaps there."

But almost before the words were out of the child's mouth, the girl's muscular young arm and hand came down with unerring violence upon his luckless head. He was very young, and the blow was a heavy one for him. He made one feeble attempt to return it, but Nell was on him again.

"Now go to your mother," she said, "or I'll give you something you'll remember."

Whereupon poor Charlie turned and fled, with his little heart bursting with schemes of impotent vengeance. And Nell, flushed with her exertions, and her black eyes glowing with the excitement, continued her walk towards the spot where Ryder and Treherne lay. As she neared them, her eyes were cast down; she appeared only to be measuring her own foot-prints in the wet sand, as she trod it firmly, leaving little pools of salt water behind her as she went. William Treherne gazed at her fixedly as she passed, but he did not move; but when she had got a little way beyond them, her dark eyes turned backward upon him with a look that made him leap to his feet and pursue her. That was just what she wanted.

"What pretty sea-nymph have we here?" he

exclaimed. "Why, a lovely girl like you shouldn't take walks alone; you should get me to walk with you."

"Stop your nonsense!" she replied, archly; but it was an unpleasant archness, too coarse to be unaffected. He saw through it, and laid his hand upon her arm.

"What's your name, my sea-beauty?" he said.

"What's that to you?" was her answer. "Take your hands off me. I never speaks to gentlemen."

"Don't you? But I'm not a gentleman."

"Ain't you now?" her black eyes opening with surprise. "I should have took you for one."

"That shows your want of discrimination. If I had known there was such a pretty girl down here, I should have come before. What beautiful eyes you have!" he added, looking right under them.

"Well, if they are, they're not for you," she said, but she cast them round upon him as she spoke; "so you needn't think it."

"Cruel creature!" he answered, with mock fervour; "what were your lips made for—those kissable lips?"

"To keep to myself," she answered, pertly.

"You don't mean that, though you say it," he said in return, "they were made for something better."

"Mr. Treherne," here interposed the lawyer, who

had risen from his reclining attitude, and advanced towards them, "I'm sorry to interfere with your flirtation, but the afternoon is getting on, and if we wish to get to Dover in time for dinner, we must think of commencing our inquiries."

"All right!" answered Treherne; "now, tell me your name, pretty one."

"Nell," she answered.

"Nell; ah! what a sweet name; I shall always think of Nell to the last day of my life. Now, won't you give me a kiss, Nell—not one?"

"I don't give nothing for nothing," she replied.

"By Jove! you're a sharp girl," he said; "why, I didn't think they knew so much down in the country;" and he took out his purse and gave her five shillings, but she looked at the coins rather contemptuously.

"*That* won't buy a gown," she said presently.

"A gown," he laughed, "I only wanted to buy a kiss with it, girl. How many will you give me if I double it then?"

"As many as you like," she said eagerly, and she looked greedily at the contents of his purse.

She would have sold herself for money. He gave her the other five shillings, and commenced taking his payment. Even then there was a great deal of

shuffling, and struggling, and screaming, as is the wont of the lower classes; but at last Mr. William Treherne seemed to have had enough even to satisfy him, and yielded to the often urged entreaties of the lawyer, that they should commence the business they found themselves in Chelton Marsh for.

"Good-bye, my mermaid," he called out as they commenced the ascent from the beach to the Hill, leaving Nell upon the sands, "I shall be back again this evening, and then I shall have some more. But I'll be hung if I give her another ten shillings, Ryder," he added to that gentleman, "they're too expensive at that price. Now, did you ever expect to find such sharpness in an out-of-the-way place like this?"

But Nell was not left on the beach alone long. The little farce she had been playing with William Treherne had not been wholly unobserved. There had been a figure watching them from the rocks above, a fine stalwart figure, young and lusty, and dressed in a fisher's garb; his tangled auburn hair and florid complexion told of a hot temperament, and his blue eyes had flashed dark, as a smiling sky in summer overclouds with the coming thunder-storm—as he watched the actions of the girl he loved with the stranger gentleman on the beach. His muscular fist had been clenched at the retreating

forms of Ryder and Treherne, but he knew they were gentlemen, and that he could do nothing. But he hurried down the rocky slope as they left the beach, and came infuriate upon the girl as she still stood in the place where they had left her, chinking the silver half-crowns against one another in her hands. She turned at his approach.

"How you startled me, John," she said.

"Startled you, Nell!" he answered, "what have you been doing that a fellow's step should startle you? I saw you from the rocks. What business have you to let gentlefolks like them chaps come a kissing you in that fashion? Answer me that, I say."

"It's nought to you, John Read" she said carelessly, "what I do. The gentleman was a real gentleman; he gave me these," and she displayed the half-crowns.

The boy's eyes—he was only her own age, little more than a boy—flashed indignant fire, he snatched the money from her hand, and before she could prevent him, with all the strength of his young free arm, had hurled it far beyond the hope or chance of rescue.

"So much for them," he almost shouted; "don't you be taking money again from strangers, Nell, or I'll serve you worse than this. He'll be a asking

somewhat more on you than kisses if I don't look out. You're not to be trusted, girl; I must keep a tighter hold on you than I have."

Nell had looked at the disappearance of her money in horror, but rage against his interference with her was the uppermost feeling.

"How dare you, John!" she commenced, and then with mingled passion and disappointment at her loss, burst into tears. They softened the fisher's honest heart at once.

"Come, now, lass, I oughtn't to have been so hard, may be, when you have so little coin; but can't you understand how it must make a man's blood boil to stand by and see stranger chaps like that thinking to pay with their money-bags for what belongs to himself. Make it up, lass," he said coaxingly, as he came near, and laid his hand upon her; "say you'll forget it."

"Don't you touch me," she answered angrily. "You're no better than a thief to throw away what ain't your own. The gentleman is coming again this evening, and I'll tell him how you've served me. You've no right to call me to account for my doings, John Read. My lips are my own to give to whom I choose."

'No, they're not," he answered; "you're mine,

Nell, every bit of you, and you knows it too; no one's got a right to you but me; and no one shall have you," and he finished his sentence with an oath, which sounded strangely amidst the calm stillness of the scene around them.

"Don't you try me too far," she said in return, "or I'll show you if I can't be whose I choose."

"I'm not afraid of that," he answered.

"Ain't you?" she said, springing to her feet, for she had sat down on the beach when she began to cry. "Then I'll show you if I can't. You forget I'm a lady born, and there's fitter mates for me than such as you."

"You'd make a nice wife for a gentleman, wouldn't you?" he replied, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice. "Come, Nell, don't let us have no nonsense. You're bound to me, and you know it, and you couldn't be another man's wife if you wanted to; but you don't want it, Nell," he added, coaxingly, "for you love me, and you've often told me so."

His words were true; she had often and often told him so, though whether she was honest in her assertion, God and her own heart only knew. She suffered him now to put his arm about her waist, and press his lips upon her face and neck, for she liked his admiration, simply because it was so.

"I've been thinking often of late, Nell," he said presently, "that we may just as well be married off, as lead this life. I shall feel easier when the thing's settled, and so, I should think, would you. I'm often afeard now, lest something should happen to prevent it, and I shan't feel comfortable till we've been to church. I shall speak to the farmer to-night about it."

And as they walked together, up and down the beach, you would have thought, could you have heard their fond words, and seen their close embraces, that this woman's heart had surely found its first, true, and all-engrossing love, and that none other would ever sway it again in like manner in this world. If you had thought so of the man's, you would not have been so far wrong.

CHAPTER II.

WHICH IS RETROSPECTIVE.

RETROSPECT is not always agreeable in real life—in fiction it is simply a nuisance. There are few of our past lives that will bear a quiet thinking over, when “the children are asleep.” There are too many “angels of our youth”—fallen angels as well as the happy denizens of heaven—to come back to us in those quiet hours, and mock our loneliness with visions of actions which we cannot undo, as well as of pleasures which we cannot recall. Are there any amongst us who can look back into those dead years and smile over the thoughts their memory arouses? If we have known sorrow during that time, we do not lessen the power it may still hold over us, by recalling its surrounding circumstances; if happiness, why, surely happiness that is past for ever is almost more sorrowful than sorrow. For myself, I think all retrospect is best left alone; let us strain every nerve to

be hopeful in the present—push forward with energy to what the future may contain for us—but leave the past to itself, unless we need encouragement from its victories, or warnings from its defeats. However, this has little to do with retrospective writing, excepting that like retrospective thought, I always skip it myself, if I possibly can, and I fully sympathize with my reader in having to wade through this chapter; my only excuse for writing it being, that I—or rather my story—cannot do without it. Like many things in this world, it is unpleasant, but necessary; so all I can promise is, to make it as short as I can. Well, then, about twenty years before the circumstances occurred which I related to you in my first chapter, there was living, on his own estate, Ariscedwyn, on the border of Wales, a gentleman of the name of Treherne. The property, which was considered one of the finest in the country, was entailed, but at that time there seemed little chance of its descending otherwise than in the straight line, as Mr. Treherne, who was a widower, had two sons and a daughter, all three grown up, or nearly so. I don't know whether they were a very promising family. Strange stories sometimes came home to Ariscedwyn of the wild pranks of the young men at Oxford, and matrons of the neighbourhood were often

seen to shake their heads over sundry deeds of Miss Harriett Treherne, that were not exactly within the rules of strict propriety they had laid down for the use of their own daughters. I am sure of one thing, that Mr. Treherne expected great things of them, whatever they promised. His married life had not been a very happy one, and he had never since the death of his wife evinced the slightest disposition to enter the state a second time. His only brother, who was in the army, and to whom he had been much attached, had fallen some ten years before in action, leaving a widow and two children, a boy and girl, almost dependent upon him for their support; and this charge he had cheerfully and ably fulfilled. To their uncle, George and Agnes Treherne owed almost everything that they possessed in the way of education or luxury, from that hour to the time they were grown up; and if there were any occupants of Mr. Treherne's heart besides his own family, they were certainly the orphans of his lamented brother. But I am running on too fast. At the time I first mentioned, a great shame—or such its owner considered it—fell upon Ariscedwyn. The daughter of the house, Harriett Treherne, fulfilled all the dark prophecies of the Monmouthshire mothers, by eloping with her music-master, who was a good-looking young

Frenchman, of the name of Du Broissart. This was a severe shock to her father. He came of an old Welsh family who carried its tree clearly, and without difficulty, up to the date of the first Prince of Wales. Mr. Treherne's great pride lay in the knowledge that it dated further back than many of the aristocracy; and he had been often heard to declare that he would not exchange that knowledge for the highest title in England. You could not wound him in a tenderer place than his family honour. His daughter had necessarily been left much to herself, but she had had every advantage of education. That a Treherne was not to be trusted with her drawing and dancing masters had never entered her father's imagination. Then, when the first shock was over, he turned his attention wholly to his sons, and tried to put the thought of Madame du Broissart (whom he had steadfastly refused to see) out of his head. But a darker shadow was destined to fall across the threshold of his house. A year or two went on, and then news came to Ariscedwyn—at first by report, as slanders do—then spoken out bravely, as if it was truth—at last confirmed by a letter in a foreign handwriting, addressed to Mr. Treherne by a stranger, that left him in no doubt that his wretched daughter had still further disgraced herself and him by leaving

her husband for a newer lover, which escapade ended in a duel and a death,—that of the unfortunate Louis du Broissart. From that day, Harriett du Broissart's name was never again heard from her father's lips.

At this period of his life his misfortunes seem to have been crowded together, so as almost to appear unnatural in the relation. But how often do we not see that one family seems to be peculiarly afflicted above others? child after child is taken, or speculation after speculation fails, till we ask ourselves the reason why, in wonderment. Such questions are best unasked, because they are unanswerable. God only knows the reason why he strips one man of every earthly possession, and permits another to live on, surrounded by blessings. He will make it all plain to us by and by: we must be content to wait his time.

Not many years after his daughter left him, Mr. Treherne found himself a childless man, living alone amongst the broad acres of Ariscedwyn. His two sons, who were nearly of an age, and passing through college together, were accidentally drowned by the upsetting of a boat at Oxford: there were other young men in the boat, but they were saved; only the two Trehernes were drowned. It was inexplicable, but the fact remained.

Poor Mr. Treherne fought against his sorrow like an imprisoned bird against the bars of its cage; but he only effected what the bird does, a further wounding of himself. Then, when his strength was spent, he began to think that it might not perhaps have been for no purpose whatever that he had been so bitterly disappointed in the hopes he had formed for his children; that he might perchance have thought a little too much of the things of this world, a little too little of the things of the world to come. They were all gone—brother, wife, daughter, sons! Of course he knew how, as he made a retrospect for himself, how much holier each relation might have been for him, if he had chosen to make it so. We all love to increase our heart's pain by such thoughts. Poor Mr. Treherne suffered bitterly from them, there is no doubt. Then, when his grief was a little softened, and he could bear to think of young people about the house again, he brought his nephew, George Treherne, who, by Madame du Broissart's second elopement, by which she resigned all claim to her father's estates, had become next heir to the property of Ariscedwyn, to live with him. There he had continued until the time that he was old enough to follow his father's profession, and enter H. M. 120th Lancers, stationed at Milborough. Nothing would

do for George but the army, and his uncle was too sensible to wish to keep him always at home doing nothing; and so young Treherne, at the time my story commences, spent his days between London, Ariscedwyn, and Milborough, where his mother and sister resided, as well as the family of his cousin, William Treherne, whom we have met before, on the sands of Chelton Marsh. This last-named gentleman was only a second cousin of George's, a son of a cousin of Mr. Treherne's; but the young men were often mistaken for one another, though no one but strangers could have done so; for though their ages, names, and heights tallied, in features and character they were as different as light from darkness.

One more dash at retrospect, and I have done. About a month before Mr. Ryder, the family lawyer, and William Treherne arrived in Chelton Marsh, Mr. Treherne, who was now fast becoming a very feeble old man, had received a letter bearing the Paris postmark. The outside did not frighten him: he had correspondents all over the world; he little dreamed of its contents. When he read the commencement, and turned eagerly to the trembling signature of "Harriett," he felt as great a shock as if all his old wounds had been torn open again. I

cannot say he had forgotten his daughter ; I am sure he had not ; but he thought of her as we think of the dead : she was completely dead to him. Dishonoured, living in shame amongst foreigners, what had Harriett du Broissart to do with Mr. Treherne of Ariscedwyn ? And yet, as he read and knew that she was still alive, though in misery, and want, and sin, the father's blood (the same blood which ran polluted in her veins) stirred within him and made his aged heart (aged, but not withered) throb, as he thought that he had still a child to call him father. Before his sons' death, had that letter come to him, he would have cast it from him, with an oath, perhaps, and never looked at it again ; but Mr. Treherne's heart was not the same heart that it had been then : he knew now that he had erred himself, that he should pity those who fall, rather than condemn ; and he felt, moreover, that he had never given his daughter's heart the opportunity of undergoing the change his own had done. So he read the penitent, humble appeal over again, and could discern through the absence of all excuse the fear that she was past it in his eyes, and past the hope of forgiveness either. The burden of the letter was, "Come to me," and to her he went.

George Treherne had no difficulty in procuring a

few days' leave, and accompanying his uncle to Paris, where they found Madame du Broissart in a third or fourth rate *quartier*, but still surrounded by a species of decayed, tawdry attempt at luxury, which made her position (for she was fast dying of some internal complaint) appear still more pitiable and hideous.

The young man was not present at any of the interviews between the father and daughter that followed; they were not scenes for a stranger's eye. I think the first one must have been a very wretched and miserable sight to see. When the poor erring daughter rose to throw herself, with a cry, into her father's arms, and then shrank back upon the sofa, with her hands across her face, as if she might by that means hide her whole self from his condemning gaze, it would scarcely have given any one pleasure to be a witness of it. But Mr. Treherne had not journeyed to Paris to judge or to reproach; he had come at the call of his own flesh and blood, to comfort and to succour; yet he was scarcely prepared for hearing a piece of news which should destroy all the prospects of the creature he loved best in the world, and his only comfort for the rest of his fast-declining years. When his daughter, after many tears and self-reproaches, burst upon him with this

intelligence, for a moment his sense of right was smothered by his natural distress, and he almost wished he had never answered that earnest appeal.

"Father," she commenced, "there is one circumstance in my life you have never heard of. Before I left Du Broissart, I had a daughter."

"Not living, Harriett?" was his answer.

"Not that I know of," she replied; "and yet I have never heard of her death. She was born within the year after my marriage. When Du Broissart found his profession failed him in England, and we thought of coming abroad, the child was an incubance in travelling, so we put her to nurse; at a village in Kent, not far from Dover."

"Well."

She began to look ashamed as she had to relate the sequel to her story.

"We had not been abroad long before I met M. Ernst."

"Don't speak his name to me," said Mr. Treherne, angrily.

"But, father," she answered, in a humble voice, "if I do not mention him, how can I tell you my story? I know it was a wretched business; I have suffered for it, God knows!"

"Poor girl," he said, compassionately (she was

still a girl to him) and the tone of his voice encouraged her.

"When I left Du Broissart (he didn't treat me well, father), when I left him with Ernst, there was that wretched duel, and poor Louis fell. I forgave him then, if I hadn't before, for all I had borne from him. I wanted to reclaim my child then, but Ernst didn't like the idea, and he was very poor, and the affair had got him into *mauvaise odour* already, so he persuaded me to let the child stay where she was."

"You unnatural mother," was her father's indignant rejoinder, "did you never make any inquiries after your own child?"

"I meant to have done so," she said, "but I never had the money either to send for her, or to pay the people what I owed them; I hoped and hoped on, till Ernst cast me off, and then——"

"Has that scoundrel deserted you?" asked Mr. Treherne, with excitement.

"Years ago," was her answer.

"And Harriett, how, tell me, how have you lived since then?"

He had risen, in his anxiety, from his sitting posture, and stood over her threateningly. She shrank from his look.

"Oh, father! don't ask me," was her cry; "how

could I have my child, my pure daughter, to live with me? She was better where she is."

He sank back in his chair as she spoke.

"God forgive you, Harriett," he said, "for all you have brought upon us. What is the address of the people with whom you left your daughter?"

"Willis; they were fishers, or some such people, living at a place called Chelton Marsh, about fifteen miles from Dover."

"And the child's name?"

"Hélène, after her father's mother, Hélène du Broissart."

Mr. Treherne made notes of both in his memorandum-book.

"Harriet," he said, as he rose to go, "I suppose you know if your daughter lives she is the heiress to Ariscedwyn."

"I had almost forgotten that," she said, mournfully; "only look after her, father, and see she doesn't come to what I have; I wish for nothing more."

"But if she lives, she must have more, she must have her rights. Ariscedwyn is entailed in the direct line, and your daughter has a nearer claim than my brother's son, though it will nearly break my heart to take it from him."

"I bring nothing but misery upon you all," was

the sad remark, a remark to which no consolation could be applied because it admitted of no denial.

But Mr. Treherne had another duty before him which he shrank from, that of humbling again his daughter's already humbled and stricken heart; his voice trembled as he said :

"But if *Hélène* lives, Harriett, and I acknowledge her heiress to my estate, I must make one condition. Don't think me harsh, my dear, I feel for you greatly; but it is my duty, namely, that I keep her in ignorance of her mother's existence. I have forgiven you, Harriett, as I hope to be forgiven, but the name of Treherne has never been linked with disgrace before."

But his words had not the effect upon her that he anticipated.

"I know it, father," she said, in a very low tone of voice. "I have no wish to see her, I shall have no opportunity, I shall not last many days now; if I had not been assured of that, I should not have dared to send for you. My course is run."

He could not believe it, she looked ill, but not so ill as that. With the knowledge, his tenderness overcame all considerations of wounded honour.

"It is true," she said, in answer to his look of in-

credulity. "You will stay with me to the last, father, won't you?"

And he did stay by her till the last day came, not a fortnight after the first he had seen her. Then, when she was laid to rest in Père la Chaise, George and he took their way homewards to Ariscedwyn. What passed between the father and daughter during those last days, was known only to themselves, but the remembrance of them rested like a ray of light in a dark place on Mr. Treherne's memory whenever his thoughts turned backward to that mournful time. A mournful time it was to him in every sense. The discovery that he had, perhaps, a grand-daughter to supersede George Treherne in his claim to the Ariscedwyn estates, hung about his neck like a millstone. Any one to supersede his favourite nephew, would have been a most unwelcome surprise. I doubt if he would have been pleased by this time if one of his sons had come back to life to claim his own; but a daughter of the French music-master, a Du Brois-sart, uneducated, unformed, who had lived all her life amongst the very poor; it was a great shock to poor Mr. Treherne, another hit at that old failing of his—pride of family. It would be difficult to describe to you how the young man took it himself. His uncle had told him, as soon as he heard of it, that

there was a chance of his being superseded in his claim. He felt it, there is no doubt; it is not likely he could have heard it, and not felt it. It is not pleasant, after having imagined yourself for fifteen or more years to be rightful heir to a splendid estate, and an income of ten thousand a year to keep it up with, to find that all your solid hopes have melted into unrealities, and that your profession must keep you for the term of your natural life. But George Treherne was not a man to show all he felt. He could not help some natural surprise and emotion on the first hearing, but it was quite enough to show his uncle that the indifference he assumed afterwards was assumed. The fact is, it was a cruel blow to him. Having commenced his career in life with being a beautiful infant, he had gone on as a pretty boy, and ended by being that most dangerous thing, a very handsome man. Dangerous not so much to others as to himself; every one had spoiled him. As I have said before, he had been early left an orphan to the care of a weak mother, who gave in to his most extravagant wishes one day, because she happened to be in a good temper, and refused his most reasonable request the next, because she happened to be in a bad one. Such treatment had failed to do more than break the spirit of his gentle sister, Agnes,

but with George it had acted differently. It had increased the strength of the naturally hot temper he had inherited from his mother, whilst the open praises she had lavished at all times on his beauty had fostered a vanity of his own appearance in him which at one time of his life had threatened to render him odious. But that time was past. As an over-dose of poison is rendered by its very quantity innocuous, so over-doses of flattery often pall upon the recipient, till he or she thinks less of their outward appearance, because they are so certain of its giving general satisfaction, than less favoured mortals ; so I am glad to tell you that at this period of his life, my hero—for George Treherne is that honoured individual—had outgrown his conceit, and thought very little of his handsome face or figure. I am afraid a great deal of the natural beauty of his character had been marred by this same injudicious treatment. He was not a dissipated man ; low pleasures he was too refined not to shrink from, but he was apt to be cynical at times, and hard, and uncharitable, and to think a great deal of his own opinion, as you will see by-and-by. In the meanwhile, he is journeying from Paris to England with his uncle. When he arrived there, he refused to go on to Wales with Mr. Treherne, and returned to his duty at Milborough.

Perhaps he scarcely felt inclined to look upon the lands he now ran so good a chance of never calling his own. Mr. Treherne had made a feeble suggestion as to George going with the family solicitor, Mr. Ryder, in search of the missing heiress, but a look came over the young man's face at the proposition, which warned his uncle he had made a mistake. So his cousin, William Treherne, who was idling his time, on leave, in England, when he ought to have been following his profession in India, accepted the office with eagerness, as affording him something to do, and fell in, as we have already seen, with the unconscious heiress herself on the sands of Chelton Marsh. So much for retrospect.

CHAPTER III.

HÉLENE DU BROISSART.

WHEN Nell and her lover returned to the Farm Cottage, which they did shortly afterwards, they found it in the greatest confusion. The girl had re-assumed her thick shoes, and replaced the kerchief on her neck and bosom, for James Willis was apt to be rather strict with his foster daughter, and had he been within would have come down sharply on her for appearing at home without a covering to her shoulders. I think, as she entered her dwelling, and saw the two stranger gentlemen she had encountered on the beach, quietly domesticated there, even her feelings of surprise were swallowed by the thought that she did not look so captivating as she could have wished. John's indignation, which had been lulled by her apparent affection during their walk, was raised again by the sight before him ; but both their attentions were soon diverted in the direction of poor

Mrs. Willis, who half lay, half sat upon a chair, with closed eyes, whilst Mrs. Cornish, bending over her, attempted to stem the torrent of her tears, by entreating her not to "take on," and poor little Charlie, though quite unconscious of the cause of the uproar, cried heartily in sympathy with his mother. Mr. Ryder and William Treherne sat by in silence, hardly knowing whether to look grave or amused at the scene before them. The sight of her foster mother's tears did not seem to move the girl's nature, though in her confusion she addressed Mrs. Cornish first :

"What's come to mother, neighbour Cornish?" she said.

"Ah! you needn't ask that, my lass," was the answer. "You'll know soon enough."

"My poor girl," said Mrs. Willis, raising her head and holding out her arms—"Oh, Nell! come to me. Oh, Nell! Nell!" and relapsed into violent weeping again.

But Nell did not move towards her, nor answer the appeal.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Won't no one tell me?"

"Is this the young person, Mrs. Willis—" inquired Mr. Ryder, the term of lady sticking in his throat as

he looked at Nell's rustic figure—"about whom we were speaking just now?"

"Yes, sir;" sobbed the woman. "Yes, sir; this is my Nell. "Of course, both the gentlemen had recognised, at once, in the object of their search, the beauty they had encountered on the beach; but beyond a look of understanding between themselves, they evinced no surprise at the discovery.

"I understand you aright," the lawyer repeated, "that this is Madlle. Hélène du Broissart?"

The "young lady's" eyes opened very wide indeed at this mention of her patronymic.

"Yes, sir;" said Mrs. Willis. "This is the baby as Mrs. Broissart left along of me, nineteen years and more ago; and I've kept her ever since. I never thought as she would be taken from me now. Oh, my girl!"

This intelligence, breaking by degrees on the minds of both Nell and John Read, seemed to affect them very differently.

"What's that you say?" exclaimed the boy, darting from his sweetheart's side to that of Mrs. Willis—"Taken from you; who'd dare to do it, neighbour Willis? Who are these gentlefolks? Who do they say they are?"

"Ah, my lad!" said Mrs. Willis, forgetting in her sorrow her indignation that Nell's name should be coupled with John Read's, and only remembering that he loved her also, and would also suffer; "this will prove a bitter day to you as well as me. I wish I could have given her to you before, John; but it wasn't to be.

"She ain't going!" he said almost breathless, and then turning to Ryder and Treherne, he added, "you ain't going to take her from us, gentlemen? are you? not now?"

"The plot thickens," said Treherne to the lawyer, in a low voice, "here's the rustic lover come on the stage," but Mr. Ryder saw such distress in the lad's face that he could not joke about it.

"You should be glad, my man," he said, that your friend is likely at last to have what she ought to have had all along, the knowledge of her own family. It has been an unfortunate mistake that Mdlle. du Broissart has been left here for so many years."

"Is that my name?" inquired Nell, as she approached the place where Ryder and Treherne sat. Her voice was very low, and almost awed as she spoke.

"It is," he answered; "don't you know that? You

knew that you were not Mrs. Willis's child, didn't you?"

"I've heard of it," she answered, still in the same low voice.

She had heard of it often, for Mrs. Willis had loved from her infancy to impress upon her mind, and those of her companions, that she was a "lady born," and she had used the term, as we have seen, in speaking of herself to John Read, but she had never realised the fact. If she had dreamed of a grand house, and grand relations, and herself in a silken dress, it had been a dream, nothing more. As the truth dawned on her, and she was capable of taking it in, her face flushed.

"Am I a real lady?" she asked. "Am I going away along with you?"

"Yes, to-morrow," he said. "I shall send a carriage for you, and then I shall take you away to your own friends.

"Oh, not to-morrow, sir, not to-morrow," screamed Mrs. Willis. "Oh, I can't bear it," and went off into hysterics again. As soon as she was quieted, Mr. Ryder addressed her:

"My good woman," he said, "I know it must be very painful for you to part with your foster child, but you must try and remember it's for her good.

The long arrears of pay which are due to you, of course, my client, Mr. Treherne, will have the greatest pleasure in making up. I have orders to calculate the sum, and write you a cheque for it, as soon as I receive Mdlle. du Broissart from your hands."

"Oh, it isn't the money, sir; it isn't the money; it's the love I have for her, which no money can't pay me for."

"You mustn't think you will never see her again," urged the lawyer, "it will be in Mdlle. du Broissart's own power to visit you whenever she pleases; at all events, after a time. Can't you say something to comfort your mother?" he added, turning to the girl, who seemed to have no feeling for any of the distress around her.

"Lor, mother," she said, carelessly, "what's the good of fretting. I'll send you a silk gown, when I gets some money, see if I don't. When will the carriage come for me, gentlemen?" she asked, turning to them, and then, striving to carry on her coquetry with Treherne, added, "I don't know as I shall go along with you."

But he was not in a mood for badinage; the fact is, now that he found that his mermaid and the heiress were one, he was rather anxious to eschew the little

insight he had gained into her character on the sands, at all events before the people she had lived with, and Mr. Ryder. It was one thing to have kissed a half-clothed fisher's girl upon the beach, and another to have been struggling with Mdlle. du Broissart, the heiress of Ariscedwyn, and giving her half-crowns. So he looked unconscious, and rather foolish, and suggested to Ryder that they had better be going. So they rose.

"Mrs. Willis," said the lawyer, "I suppose I am in possession of all the proofs you can give me that this young —— lady (he got it out this time) is the same infant which was left to your charge by Madame du Broissart?"

"Yes, sir; you have the letters and the clothes, and there's no other proof, except the word of all the village, who have known the girl since she was a baby. I wouldn't deceive you, gentlemen. I wish I could, and keep her along of me still."

"I have instructions from Mr. Treherne, the grandfather of Mdlle. du Broissart, to have her placed as soon as possible under the guardianship of a friend of his in London; therefore, I shall come over here myself to-morrow morning, and shall expect to find her ready to accompany me there. Of course, she will be provided with everything necessary in the shape

of clothes on her arrival, so you need not trouble yourself to pack anything."

"Pleasant for you to have to take her to town in that guise," was William Treherne's remark to him, as they walked down the little pathway together.

"I'm used to all kinds of nasty jobs," was the answer. "I shall take a carriage to ourselves. Shall you go with us?"

"Not if I know it," was his answer, as his peal of laughter was wafted back into the little cottage room, and mixed sadly with some of the sounds of lamentation there; but as the gentlemen left the garden-gate, a step came hurrying after them, and the face of John Read was presently by their side. It was very pale, and the voice with which he spoke to them was hoarse and indistinct.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I ask your pardon for stopping you, but please tell me are you going to take her far away?"

"Are you speaking of Mademoiselle du Broissart, my lad?" said Ryder.

"Yes, sir; who should I speak of else? The folks as wish to have her back again, do they live very far from here?"

"Very far; in Wales."

"I ain't no scholar, gentlemen; but if you'll tell

me the name of the place she's a going to, I shan't forget it." And he gave a mighty thump over his heart, as though he would say there was something there which never forgot.

"The name of the place is Ariscedwyn," said Mr. Ryder.

"Aris-ced-wyn," repeated the boy, slowly, as the men moved onwards. "Thank you, gentlemen, Arisced-wyn; "I shan't forget."

But there was such a mighty sound in the name, something so far above Chelton Marsh, that it struck the young heart like a knell; and as he turned to re-enter the cottage-door, he burst into a flood of tears.

But the next morning, when Mr. Ryder appeared, cheque in hand, to receive over his charge, he saw a sight he would have given a good round sum, lawyer though he was, to have avoided seeing. Poor Farmer Willis, a grey-headed old countryman, looking more like a labourer on Sunday than an agriculturist, in red waistcoat, velveteen coat, and leathern gaiters, had stayed at home, scarcely less distressed than his wife at the sudden parting which had come upon them; though I don't know whether, being a man, the idea of nineteen years' back interest, which amounted to something considerable for their station

of life, did not go far towards drying his tears at a later period, if not now. But notwithstanding that, his sorrow was very genuine, considering what a plague the high spirit of his adopted daughter had proved to him, especially of late years.

Hélène, as we must in future call her, was dressed in her best, and certainly looked very handsome, if she did not look very much like the lady she was thenceforth to be called.

As Mr. Ryder settled money matters with the old farmer at one end of the little room, and Mrs. Willis bustled about to see that the eatables she had prepared for the girl's journey (for poor people always consider you must want to eat on a journey, however short), were properly packed, John Read drew Hélène into the shelter of the cottage-porch for a last word.

"Nell," he said, passionately, "I don't ask you not to forget me; you can't do that, I'm sure; but you'll let me have word of your doings till I see you again; for you'll come back to us, Nell, won't you?"

"Of course you'll hear of me," she answered, "and so will mother and father. London's a fine place, John; and when I learn to write, I'll send you letters, and tell you all about it."

"If they make such a lady of you, you won't be wanting to come back to Chelton," he said, mourn-

fully ; "but, lady or not, Nell, your word's pledged to me, mind that. You're mine, ain't you? now say you are, and you'll come back to your husband."

"Of course I will, John," was the answer ; but she didn't believe what she said. Her heart was already dwelling on what might be in store for her as a lady ; and she was clever enough to know that a change like this must prove a complete break-up to the ties of her former life.

He read the doubt. Love made him acute, where nature had not.

"You won't forget what's passed between us, Nell," he said, presently, as he looked into her face.

"No," she whispered in return.

It sounded like a whisper of love ; but his words had recalled that to her mind which made her feel that the sooner all communication was broken off with the man before her the better, and the whisper was one of determination ; but he did not read it so.

"I know you won't," he answered. "I was a fool to doubt you. Here, sit down here, Nell ; the gentlemen ain't looking ; let me lie with my head on your bosom once more." And, as she seated herself, the tangled mass of auburn locks, and the honest, handsome face, with its earnest bright blue eyes nestled closely to her own. There he sat or lay,

drinking in each sound of her beating heart, each glance of her dark eyes, noting every line of the figure he was not to see again for so long. But with all his sorrow he had faith in her: he did not dream it was for the very last time; he believed she would certainly come back to him again.

And her thoughts were far away the meanwhile, with carriages and horses, and great houses, and gentlemen paying her homage, and very little pity for the young heart which beat against her own was in the breast he lay on. It was only for a few minutes (five, perhaps), but a great deal of thought will go into a very small space sometimes. They might have sat there half an hour for aught they marked the lapse of time, when the farmer's voice roused them to their feet again.

"My lad, you must give over fooling," he said, "the gentleman wants to be gone."

Then H  l  ne was clasped first in one pair of arms, then another; and tears, and blessings, and kisses were showered upon her till she would have been a fiend incarnate and not human, had not a few natural drops found their way down her own cheeks. Mr. Ryder stood very patiently till the sad farewells were over, and the entreaties she would come back to them, and the promises that she would do so, had

been repeated again and again; and then he asked the foster parents to take her to the carriage which waited in the road below. As he prepared to follow them, he saw the lad John Read gazing through the lattice after her receding figure in gloomy silence. The sight touched him.

"You'll see her again, my lad, perhaps," he said, kindly, as he passed him to follow her footsteps.

"I know that, sir," was the reply, "but I can't help grieving to part with her. I know she'll come back. She said so!" And the look of love and faith lighted up his tear-stained features as he watched the carriage drive off with all he held worth caring for on earth. But though he had faith, the essence of his life went with her.

That evening, when even farmer Willis and his wife had lost for the time being the remembrance of their sorrow in sleep, there was a light still burning in the hut upon the beach which was occupied by John Read and his blind mother; and any one looking in at the uncurtained windows might have seen his young careless figure bowed down upon the table as he sat there, unemployed, his face hidden in his hands, his whole attitude that of one stricken down by the most enervating grief.

"John, my lad," said the feeble voice of his

mother, from the next room (if rooms they might be called), "ain't you in bed yet?"

He rose and walked to her side, and sat down upon the edge of the bed, and took her hand in his. She was a feeble-looking woman, not old yet, but so quiet and subdued from her affliction, that you might have thought her so. As she felt the boy's hand creep into hers, she half rose in her bed.

"What ails you, my dear son," she said, "that you ain't gone to rest yet? It must be past midnight, John. You'll never be up to-morrow in time for the boats."

"Yes I shall, mother," he said, in answer; and the voice was so cheerful, it seemed unnatural it should proceed from the sad and fallen mouth. "I'm all right, mother; you go to sleep again."

"You ain't fretting, my dear lad?" she asked, anxiously.

"Fretting!" he exclaimed. "Why, what about? Nell?"

"I was afraid you'd take her going to heart, dear," the woman said, with the tenderest affection in her tones. "You've been used to be so much together, and I'm bad company for such as you, my son."

"I shall miss her, I dare say," he replied, and he

bit his lips to prevent a falter in his tone; "but 'twon't be for long, mother. Nell will be back again soon, I dare say."

"Are you sure of that, lad? I don't want to grieve you, dear; but are you sure she'll be true to you? It would be worse in the end if it proved not, and you hadn't thought it, John. Her's ain't a true voice, somehow."

"Oh, nonsense, mother," he said, "don't go so by voices; if you'd seen her face you wouldn't say so. Of course, I'm sure she'll come back to us all, as soon as she gets her own way; and the gentleman said that would be after a time."

"Then you're quite happy, dear?" But the blind woman's voice had a yearning tenderness in it, which was almost more plaintive than tears.

"Quite," he answered briskly. "Now let me lay you down again, mother, and don't you worry about me. I'll turn in directly I've got out the nets for to-morrow's use." And he bent down to kiss her pale face; she caught his between her hands, and kissed it a dozen times over, as she pressed it closely to her own, and bid God bless her lad, as she released him.

She loved him so, he wouldn't have distressed her with the knowledge of what he was suffering for

worlds. So he left her in happy ignorance, and walked back into his own room, unselfish hero! his heart nearly bursting with what it felt, but felt, as long as in her hearing, without a sound; only as he threw himself across the rough couch he called a bed, the groans came low, and long, and deeply from his soul, without which it would have withered.

When the next day's sun shone upon the various actors in this life drama, it saw them widely separated: William Treherne was with his own family again, in Milborough; Mr. Ryder, after having left his rather awkward incumbrance, in the shape of Mademoiselle Hélène du Broissart, under the charge of the lady he had been commissioned to deliver her to in London, was making his way down to Ariscedwyn, to report proceedings to his client; and John Read was plying his daily occupation for his blind mother's support, mending nets, setting lines, pulling out to sea and back again, as if his honest, brave, devoted heart beat as it had ever done, and bore no unaccustomed grief, like a heavy weight entangled as stones in seaweed, about its very nerves.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MASTER OF ARISCEDWYN.

THE grounds of Ariscedwyn looked beautiful in the light of a summer's morning. So thought Mr. Ryder, as he paced thoughtfully up and down the broad gravelled terrace in front of the house, waiting a summons to the presence of its master. A house was the only term you could apply to that building; it was not sufficiently grand to be called a mansion, nor sufficiently antique to call itself a priory or a castle; it was simply a comfortable modern house, large enough for any required purposes, good enough to have belonged to any member of the aristocracy, with lofty, well lighted apartments, and containing all the modern charms of billiard-room, conservatory, and ball-room. Any one could see that it had not been built long, and, indeed, fifty years was the outside of its age; it had been erected by the present Mr. Treherne's father, when the walls of the old mansion had been pronounced no longer repairable,

and likely to come down any day on the heads of his family. There were still some remains of the old place, said to have been built by one Jeffrey Treherne, more than five hundred years before, to commemorate the safe return from battle, and subsequent marriage of his only son, who afterwards went out of his mind, and killed himself by a leap from the roof of the very mansion his father had erected in gratitude for his preservation. A sad story, but, doubtless, with no more truth in it than most old women's tales. When we see how much moss a rolling stone can gather in a few days in our own time (what a stupid proverb it is that says it doesn't), we need not be surprised if, after the lapse of years, it is so coated over that none of the original stone is to be seen. The chapel which belonged to the old house was still standing intact, and was a very beautiful specimen of the architecture of the time it was built in; otherwise there was little that was not modern about Ariscedwyn, except the wood. As Mr. Ryder stayed his regular pacing up and down for a moment to gaze upon the scene before him, he could not help thinking what a strange destiny it was that had taken in a day the promise of all this wealth out of the hands of the man who had been reared to expect it, and given it to a young girl who was even

yet in utter ignorance that it existed, and could scarcely be anticipated ever to become fit to hold it properly. From beneath the broad terrace which he stood on, sloped away a vast lawn, so large and smooth, and finely kept, it looked like a sheet of green velvet laid down for royalty to step on. No beds of flowers were permitted to cut up and spoil its smooth extent; from end to end it was level, unbroken, and verdant. Where it ended, a light, invisible fence marked the boundary of the park, which had been the pride of the Trehermes for centuries past. No trees were ever permitted to be felled there to satisfy hungry creditors; not an acre of Ariscedwyn had ever been mortgaged. The Trehermes had numberless faults, but they had always been respectable, and that worst description of "wild oats," robbing tradesmen of their own, had not been amongst the category of their crimes, consequently the park of Ariscedwyn had flourished in peace. Amongst its ancient trees were many of the finest specimens our country can produce. Under their shade, herds of fallow deer lay down to rest amidst the cool ferns, whilst white boards nailed up here and there against the trees, with the word "dangerous" painted on them in black letters, marked the approach to the haunts of the drove of

red deer, and were as studiously avoided by all females as if they led to the den of the old gentleman himself. The morning as yet was not sufficiently advanced to prove unpleasantly hot, but when it was so, what cover from heat that park afforded, with its banks of ferns and wild flowers, and its various dells so shut in from the sun's rays that the ground was always dark and damp, and the grass grew short and greyish green! A very pleasant place to lie at full length in, with a volume of Tennyson or Longfellow in your hand, on a full-grown August day, and think how all the world outside is broiling, whilst you are half lulled to sleep by the soft rustling of the boughs overhead, and the drowsy hum of bees amongst the foxgloves, linked to the memory of dreamy, musical poetry; but not so nice on a winter's day, when the inner man is sufficiently chilled already, and shudders at the very thought of grassless banks and dripping branches. Well, nothing can be delightful at all times, even love palls when you are hungry and want your dinner, and there were other charms at Ariscedwyn to turn to when the park failed to be charming. You must not suppose because flowers were banished from the lawn, that they were banished altogether; for there was the rose garden on the south side of the house, and the general garden at the

back, with its wealth of hothouses and conservatories, and the kitchen gardens beyond that, a mass of fruit, both in and out of season, and forcing frames and hot-beds, and pineries, and grape-houses; and on the fourth side of the house a fine mass of flowering shrubs, round which the carriage-drive swept, and to which were adjacent, stables, and coach-houses, and all the outbuildings necessary to the comfort of a large establishment—adjacent yet unseen, by the judicious arrangement of walls and shrubberies. And then the broad drive led off to the iron gates, which opened upon the highway, and was kept throughout its course as the approach to a gentleman's house should be; and around and beyond all this mass of comfort and luxury, lay acres and acres of arable land, either let out to agriculturists, or turned to use for the Arisedwyn stables, all belonging to the same noble property. Surely, it was not a place to be relinquished without many a sigh. So thought Mr. Ryder, as he looked down upon it from the terrace. He had come down the night before, after having left Mdle. du Broissart with the lady at Blackheath, to whom he had been commissioned to give her in charge, but he had arrived too late to see Mr. Treherne, who had suffered in his health from the late events which had crowded so thickly upon him.

A hasty letter from Dover had informed him that the heiress to his estate was found, and Mr. Ryder had come down to give him the particulars of their journey and subsequent actions with respect to his grand-daughter. As he stood, thinking and gazing, a servant advanced from the doors of the breakfast room, which opened on to the terrace, to inform him that Mr. Treherne was ready to see him. Not in the breakfast-room, however, but in his own dressing-room, where he usually had his breakfast. Mr. Ryder thought he saw a difference in him already, as the old man rose in his dressing-gown to receive him as he entered the room. His face looked careworn and harassed, and had lost the look of content it had now for many years past possessed. As he wished Mr. Ryder "good morning," he apologized for not having met him at the breakfast-table.

"I'm getting very old, Ryder," he said, "and begin to feel very disinclined to early rising." And then, as if to commence the subject was a great effort, and he felt he had better plunge into it at once, he added: "You did not tell me much in your letter, Ryder, about my—my grand-daughter; of course we can't expect to make it a pleasant subject, but I must hear all about it, so the sooner the better."

"I had not time, sir, in my hurried note to give you any particulars respecting Mdlle. du Broissart, nor had I seen sufficient of her then to be justified in passing an opinion; I had better opportunities of observation during our journey to London together.

"What is she like, Ryder?"

"She is very handsome, sir, something like Mr. William Treherne, it struck me; a fair, rosy-complexion, with dark hair and eyes."

"Ah! the Treherne face, regularly Welsh, eh, Ryder?"

"Well, sir, I should say, not quite; she bears a mixture of foreign blood in her features."

"But what kind of a girl did she seem, Ryder? I know she must be uneducated, and so forth, but did you see no traits of her character? did she appear modest and affectionate, and so forth."

Mr. Ryder thought of the kisses and the half-crowns, and the utter indifference displayed on Mdlle. du Broissart's part when she bade farewell to those who had cared for her from infancy, and felt silence was his only resource.

"Well, Mr. Treherne, I should feel myself scarcely justified if I even attempted to answer such a question to you; you forget I only saw the young lady alto-

gether for a few hours, and then not under the most favourable circumstances. When I left her under Miss Plimpton's charge, she appeared very shy, but that was natural.

"Ah, well!" said the old man, "shyness is a good quality in a young woman, and not too often cultivated amongst the lower orders. That is what I most fear, Ryder; the moral feelings she may have imbibed from the class she has associated with, want of education would be a trifle compared to it."

"The woman who has had the charge of her—Mrs. Willis—seemed a very respectable person," said Mr. Ryder, "and exceedingly fond of Mdle. du Brois-sart."

"I think Miss Plimpton will do all she can for her," added Mr. Treherne, as if he had not heard Mr. Ryder's last remark. "I wrote and told her all the circumstances, and she promised she would. It is not everybody that would undertake such a charge, but old Mrs. Plimpton was governess to my late wife, and they are indebted to her family in some measure for their present position. Not that I would have taken advantage of such a fact, but some one must do it for me. It will be a heavy responsibility."

"I suppose you will run up to Blackheath and see

Mdlle. du Broissart yourself, sir, before long; will you not?" demanded Mr. Ryder.

"Yes, Ryder; yes, after a little. I don't feel equal to the journey just at present, and would rather delay it. It cannot be expected I should look forward to it as a pleasure—my poor George!"

Mr. Ryder also thought it might be advisable the introduction was delayed till Mademoiselle du Broissart had been a little drilled by Miss Plimpton, and so offered no objection to the proposal of his client. The old man sat for some time silent, and as in deep thought, and then he said:

"Mr. Ryder, I have been thinking very much, as you may suppose, ever since I knew there was a probability of this girl being found, about Ariscedwyn passing away from George Treherne. It is breaking my heart, Ryder; it is, indeed!"

"You shouldn't think of it so much as that, sir," was the lawyer's reply. "Mr. George Treherne does not, I am sure."

"I don't know that, Ryder; the boy is not one to show his feelings easily. I'm sure he was very much cut up when he heard it, though he said little enough about it. But as for me, I think of it night and day. The place must be his, Ryder; it would be pure injustice to take it from him; but there is only one

way he can have it now, and that is by marrying this girl. That is what has made me so anxious, Ryder, to see you. Tell me, is there any chance that she will ever be fit to be his wife?"

Mr. Ryder almost shuddered as he thought what a lucky beggar the husband of *Hélène du Broissart* would probably prove, but it was not his business to say so.

"My dear sir," he commenced, "education will doubtless do wonders for *Mademoiselle du Broissart*; and as for her personal appearance, she only requires dress to make that all it should be for a *Treherne*."

"How soon do you think I shall be able to have her home, Ryder?"

"I am scarcely a judge in such matters, sir. Miss *Plimpton* would be a better referee; but a few years, I should think, would be necessary to elapse, before such an event. A few years are nothing for education, when everything has to be begun."

"A few years!" exclaimed Mr. *Treherne*. "I couldn't wait till then, the suspense would kill me. Why, George might marry in the interim!"

"I wouldn't mention the subject to Mr. George though, sir, if I may presume to offer you my advice, until *Mademoiselle du Broissart* is fit to become his wife, else you may mar your own wishes. Young

men are apt to run rusty, if such delicate matters as the choice of a wife are suggested to them, instead of being left to their own inclinations."

"I don't think George would refuse me, if I asked him," said Mr. Treherne.

"But I wouldn't ask him, sir; at least, not yet, if I were you," rejoined the lawyer, decidedly.

But his good advice was thrown away upon Mr. Treherne. He thought over the project of the marriage both night and day, till he longed to receive an assurance from his nephew that he would try and not oppose his wishes in the matter, until one morning, not many after his conversation with Mr. Ryder, when he had just received rather a satisfactory letter from Miss Plimpton, written in a very hopeful strain, as regarded her new pupil, and the lawyer had gone back to his chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and taken his friendly counsel with him, Mr. Treherne sat down to his writing-table, and the following letter was carried in the Ariscedwyn bag to the next post town the same afternoon.

"Ariscedwyn, August 18—.

"MY DEAR GEORGE,—I wish you would get three days' leave and come down to Ariscedwyn. I have not been well since my journey to Paris, and I miss

you sadly. William will have told you all about the finding of Mademoiselle du Broissart, and my subsequent actions with regard to her. I have this morning received a letter from Miss Plimpton, the lady under whose charge she has been placed, written in a very hopeful strain, as to the probabilities of her being able to take her proper place here at no lengthened period. From this, I opine she has natural ability, a gift I have often heard you say you admire most in women. I shall not write more, as I have much to say to you which will not go in a letter. Hoping to see you soon, I remain,

“Your affectionate uncle,

“G. TREHERNE.”

George Treherne was in barracks when he received this letter, employed in the operation of dressing; he had been going through it moodily enough, his thoughts occupied with the loss he had sustained, though he would scarcely have acknowledged it. This letter did not tend to make him more lively. He thought his uncle had taken up the granddaughter's cause very quietly, and looked forward to her taking her proper place at Ariscedwyn as the most natural thing in the world.

“What is it to me,” he said, angrily, to himself,

"whether the girl has natural ability or not? it has been directed too long to the occupation of shrimping, I should imagine, to be fit for much else. I don't want to go down to Arisedwyn, and I shan't go."

But his better feelings gained the victory over this little outburst of pettishness, for he really cared for his uncle, and knew well enough that he was cared for in return; so he procured his three days' leave, and as soon as it was obtained, started for Wales.

CHAPTER V.

GEORGE REFUSES TO BE REASONABLE.

As George Treherne lay back in the railway carriage which was conveying him to his uncle's house, enveloping himself, contrary to all regulations, in a cloud of smoke, his thoughts were certainly not of the most pleasurable kind. It had always been somewhat of a duty with him to bury himself, at stated periods, at Ariscedwyn, and become the companion of an old, fidgety man; but who shall say the duty was not rendered sweeter by the knowledge that, in return for it, the fine old place which now appeared so dull should some day be his own, to enliven as he thought fit?

George Treherne was not without feeling, though he often professed to be so; he was really very fond of his uncle, but he thought it selfish in him to drag him down to Ariscedwyn now, for his own comfort, when he must have known the sight of it would be distasteful to him. So he told himself as he moodily

smoked, and the train rushed onwards with him to the place he would rather have avoided. As he lay back on the dark cushions, his profile turned towards the light, he appeared quite handsome enough to have justified any mother in the folly of spoiling him. Tall, and yet well made (two desirabilities which seldom come together in mankind), his figure, without being thin, was yet sufficiently unencumbered with flesh to render it graceful. From his Irish mother he had inherited the fair complexion and black hair almost peculiar to her nation, whilst from beneath the long black lashes there beamed a pair of dark-blue eyes, which could look anything and everything they liked at one and the same moment. The rest of his features were good; the lines of his nosé, the curves of his mouth, had been pronounced perfect; but few who knew him intimately thought much of his nose or his mouth, his hair or his teeth, after they had once met the searching glance of his eyes; and yet they were not very large eyes; they were in shape long, and half closed, and in expression sleepy, earnest, sad, mirthful, just as the humour took him, and everything in extremes. When he was gay, they lit up, as gas will spring up from a thousand jets in one moment, and then they seemed as if they would run over with fun; when he was serious—I cannot

tell you how they looked when he was serious, it was impossible, at such time, to meet his gaze and not veil your own : you felt as if your heart was laid bare at once. He was a dangerous man for women to look at, perhaps more dangerous in that way than on a closer inspection ; for he had been so flattered, so gazed at, so fallen in love with, so what men call " lucky " with the sex, that Mr. George Treherne had become rather tired of such attentions, and I am afraid occasionally gave himself airs where women were concerned. He held himself very much aloof from them all, steadfastly refused all invitations to dinners or evening parties, professed to have renounced dancing, and to be shy in society, and was all for men, and billiards, and hunting, and everything in which the fair sex took no part. So the young ladies of Milborough had to be content with gazing at him in church, and envying his sister Agnes and his cousins for being admitted to the proud position of his friends. Not that I would have you think for a minute that he ever forgot himself where politeness was required of him : on such occasions no one could be more particular than George Treherne ; and he treated every woman alike ; a milkmaid would have received as much attention from him as a duchess, had she required it ; but that

did no good, except by making them all more in love with him than ever; and I am afraid he had pretty much the same opinion of the whole sex, duchesses and milkmaids alike, and troubled his head very little about any of them.

When he got out of the train at the nearest station to Ariscedwyn, he did not even notice the looks of admiration which followed his nonchalant, easy walk as he strolled down the line of carriages. Most people asked who he was, and many a pretty face was thrust out of the carriage windows to watch his progress and see the last of his handsome figure; but he went on, perfectly unconscious; and if he had not been, he would not have turned his head to see whether his admirers were young or old. It had come to this with George Treherne, that admiration was a bore to him. A little wholesome indifference would have bound him to a woman for life.

Mr. Treherne was unaffectedly glad to see him. It is not to be supposed that he can have looked at his nephew's beauty with the same feeling that the women did, but he certainly thought him the handsomest creature he had ever known, and took the greatest pride in hearing him praised. He was delighted to see him, and yet there was a reserve

between them, though George tried to be as cheerful as possible, and rather overdid his part.

Mr. Treherne was not one of those men who avoid the mention of their property passing to others; far from it: he had quite resolved within himself that, if his own life was spared to a great age, that he should wish to see Ariscedwyn in his nephew's hands before his death, though it would still nominally be considered his own. He had looked forward to George's marrying and settling there with his wife, and he himself occupying but a very small part of the large mansion, and resigning all the reins of government into his nephew's hands; and now that pleasant dream might still be realized, if George would only be reasonable; but he had always been so opposed to the subject of marriage, that Mr. Treherne trembled when he thought of approaching the matter with him. With one thought uppermost in his heart, and their usual topic of conversation, the estate and its doings, closed between them, Mr. Treherne was almost driven into a corner, and, being silent and reserved, made himself appear really ill to his nephew:

"You hadn't any real illness, had you, uncle, after our trip to Paris?" George at last asked.

They were sitting together after their dinner, the

dessert on the table, the long French windows thrown open to the lawn, where the August daylight was dying a bright death.

"No, not exactly ill, George, but worried, worried," was the old gentleman's reply. He hoped his nephew would help him out with what he wished to say; but no remark came in answer to his own. He had asked him down on purpose to speak to him of the subject which was nearest to his heart. He had forgotten Mr. Ryder's advice, or if he had not forgotten it, he had no intention of taking it, but he had hoped to come to the point in a more roundabout way, and to have prepared George's mind a little for the proposal he had to make to him. But the silence continued, and he had nothing to do but to broach the subject himself.

"This business of Mdle. du Broissart has worried me very much, George, you must be aware," he presently continued.

Oh! it's no good worrying about it," was the young man's answer, "if it's me you are thinking about, uncle; I'm all right."

But he did not look all right as he said so.

"Of course it's you, George," was his uncle's reply; "you must be aware that the sudden appearance of this young lady must have caused me great pain

on your account. You have been brought up to look upon these acres as your own ; and apparently you had the best right so to consider them ; and now to find that this girl—I must feel it, George ; I must feel it,” and Mr. Treherne blew his nose, and showed other signs of emotion. George was touched by the sight.

“My dear uncle,” he said, “I am really obliged to you for thinking so much of me ; but it can’t be helped, you see ; it’s no one’s fault ; we must make the best of it.”

“Ryder was down here a few days ago,” said Mr. Treherne, “and he tells me Hélène is very handsome, a fine-looking girl, with quite the Treherne face and figure.”

“So William told me.”

Ah ! he did, did he ?” said Mr. Treherne, eagerly. “Young men are better judges than old in these matters ; are they not, George ? Well, then, I shall take that for granted, and I had a very satisfactory letter from Miss Plimpton also—a very satisfactory letter, considering the short time she had known the young lady. She says she finds her mental capacity very good, and that she has proved hitherto very amenable to discipline, good qualities both of them, George ; very good.”

"Very good, sir, indeed," said George, carelessly.

"She is only twenty now, George, a couple of years will work wonders in her. Miss Plimpton thinks that time, at the farthest, will see her fit to be introduced here as my grand-daughter and heiress."

"I have no doubt it will, sir, if she has ordinary sharpness."

"But I cannot bear the idea, George, of any one being heir here but yourself. I have looked on you as my successor, almost as my son; it seems pure injustice Ariscedwyn passing into other hands."

"But if there is no help for it, sir," said George, "you *must* bear it. I can bear it for myself."

"There is a help, George, if you will only see the thing in the same light as I do. Ryder advised me not to mention the subject to you at present, for fear it might set you against the idea, but I am sure you will not refuse me, if you possibly can avoid it. Ariscedwyn is Hélène du Broissart's, but it will also be Hélène du Broissart's husband's. It is the only way you can hold it now, George, it is my most earnest wish——"

"Marry Mdle. du Broissart, sir? Do I understand you right?"

"Yes, George; there's nothing so wonderful in that, is there, to become the husband of a young, handsome

girl, and the owner of this estate? Not now, of course, but when she shall be fit to become your wife."

"You do not seem to have taken the matter of Mdlle. du Broissart's inclinations into your consideration, uncle; however, Ryder was wrong in his advice to you, in so far that it could make no difference in my answer whether the proposal came sooner or later. I have no intention of marrying, thank you; I have abjured the whole sex, and am not inclined to alter my opinion in this instance, even though the lady holds Ariscedwyn in her hands. That I have worried myself a little about this business is true, but that is over now, and I intend to stick to my profession for a support."

"But think of Ariscedwyn, George, passing perhaps, into a stranger's hands."

"From which misfortune I am to save you," said the young man, as he rose and leant carelessly against the mantelpiece.

"It's not only to save me," answered Mr. Treherne, rather testily; "do you mean to say, sir, it would not be for your own good also?"

"In a worldly point of view, perhaps," said George Treherne, "but I scarcely feel inclined to benefit myself by marrying a——"

The young man's tone of voice was so sarcastic, that his uncle interrupted him before he had finished his sentence.

"She is my grand-daughter, sir, and has the Treherne blood running in her veins," he said angrily.

"Yes, yes, exactly so," was George's answer, lengthily drawn out; "but I needn't say any more on this subject, sir; I presume you have been joking with me."

Joking with him! when it had been Mr. Treherne's thought, night and day, for weeks past; it was too much for him.

"I hope you may find it a joke, young man, to lose a place like this. You know as well as I do that I was in earnest in asking you to consider this matter."

"Oh, well! if you are really in earnest, uncle," retorted George, roused in his turn, "all I have to say is, I decidedly refuse the offer. I marry a girl without education or breeding of any kind, the daughter of a——"

"Take care what you are about, George," cried Mr. Treherne, "don't mention my daughter's name, or you may repent it."

His words recalled the young man to himself. He recollected who he was speaking to at once, but he was still very hot and flurried as he said:

"I beg your pardon, uncle, if I have forgotten myself; but this is a subject I would rather not pursue. I do not think I could trust myself to speak of it calmly. You took me exceedingly by surprise, else I should have been more guarded in my answer. It would have been the same though in any instance. With your leave I will stroll out and have a cigar, and I dare say I shall be all right when I come in again."

His stroll was a long one, for he took some time to cool. Mr. Treherne had taken him very much by surprise, but it was surprise of a most unpleasant kind. He, the fastidious creature, who scarcely ever saw a woman he considered fit to look at, asked to marry a girl half French, half fisher, wholly ignorant; to mingle his blood with that of the music-master, and, even in his own heart, he scarcely liked to give poor Harriett du Broissart the name she had earned; he, who was so noted for his refinement of taste that it was a by-word in his corps. George's aristocratic nose and lip curled upwards at the very idea. The thought of her being his cousin, of being compelled to associate with her, disgusted him; but his wife! Amidst all his supreme indifference for women, and his want of faith in their good qualities, he had had visions, as all men do at times, of what the word "wife" might mean some day to himself. He had

pictured a pure half-celestial being, refined and delicate in the extreme, with a mind cultivated and attuned to be the companion to his own. He had not thought of her as very beautiful so much as very pure in mind and body, and very intellectual. We all have such dreams at times when we are young. When our ideals come at last, and make us slaves, they are generally very opposite to what we imagined they would be, but we satisfy ourselves with the idea that what they want in one particular they make up in another which we never dreamt about, and so love reigns triumphant after all. I dare say when George Treherne's ideal becomes a reality in these pages, you will find her very different from what I have described his thought to be; but he will worship her none the less, nor will he imagine he ever wished for anything different. I think it was this thought of a wife (it was nothing more, it seldom came to him at all, except on a Sunday, or when he lay awake at night) that had turned him against the race of womankind; he looked for her in the wrong place, amongst young ladies just come out, or old stagers who had been on the boards for many seasons, and what he dreamt of is not to be found every day, nor among such as these.

"No, by heavens!" he thought to himself as his

visionary wife rushed through his mind, and he compared her with the description of *Hélène du Broissart*, "Ariscedwyn is bad enough to lose without my honour going with it; why, I should never look myself in the face again; and as for her—faugh! the poor old boy must be in his dotage. Poor Mr. Treherne was very humble when his nephew joined him again. He felt he had made a mistake in mentioning the subject so soon.

"Why didn't I take Ryder's advice?" he thought, and wait till the boy had seen the girl. He might have taken a fancy to her himself as she is so handsome. Beauty is everything with young blood. Well, I shall run down to Blackheath myself soon, and pass my own judgment on her, and if I let matters rest for the present, there is no saying what I may not do by and by, if I get them together down here." So his first words to his nephew were almost apologetic.

"You mustn't think anything of what I said, my dear boy," he commenced; "treat it as the foolish whim of an old man. I was too anxious on the subject, or I should not have been so hasty as to require a promise from you before you had seen the young lady."

"Well, it was rather absurd," said George, smiling. "Never mind, uncle, we'll forget all about it."

"But you will not object, George, to see H  l  ne, will you? She is your own cousin, you know; and she has no nearer relatives after me than Agnes and yourself."

"Oh, no; of course, I shall be very glad to make her acquaintance, uncle. People might think I was piqued about losing Ariscedwyn otherwise."

"And—now don't be vexed with me again, my dear boy; but you will promise me, George, won't you, not to enter into any engagements without telling me first?"

George turned round with a well-affected stare of surprise.

"Engagements, uncle? What, for the Derby?"

"No, no, George; you know well enough what I mean. Engagements for marriage. Young people are often hasty in such matters; and it would give me great uneasiness to know——"

George's hand was on the old man's shoulder before he had concluded his speech:

"Now, uncle, once for all," he said, don't concern your head about such a thing. I've no intention of throwing myself away. Why, what do you think I'm made of?" he added, relapsing into a laugh. "I have told you, again and again, I never intend to marry. I scarcely ever speak to a woman. They are all very

well, I have no doubt, individually, but as a mass, I hate them.

Mr. Treherne was quite startled by the vehemence of his tone.

"Why, what reason have you to do that, George?" he asked. "Have they treated you badly?"

His nephew's laugh of amusement at the idea was significance itself.

He was too modest to say they had treated him too well, but no one could mistake his mirth.

"Doesn't Solomon say there is such a thing as having too much honey, uncle?" he asked, presently. I have no doubt if one had time in this world to study any one woman's character properly, one would find a great deal that was lovable in it; but as a mass, they are so superficial, so eager to outdo one another, so caught by outside show and glitter, and, by Jove, so little principled; why, talk of men, sir; why, women beat men any day. Their innocence is ignorance, nothing more. Teach them how to play off their arts, and trade with their charms; and, by Jove, don't they? It's a sickening subject, sir; pray don't let us pursue it."

"Well," said Mr. Treherne, shaking his head, "I don't know what you young men would have, now-a-days. I think you are all spoiled. There were plenty

of good and true and pure women in my time, and I don't suppose the race can quite have died out. The very first thing you should think of is marriage, and it seems the very last thing that you will do."

"Yes, you are right there, as far as I am concerned," answered his nephew. "I've seen enough of other people's marriages, uncle; the woman doesn't live who could induce me to put my head in the noose. Are you for bed, sir? I'm tired to death with my day's journey."

So Mr. Treherne dropped the subject in despair until a more favourable opportunity should arise, but he got nothing more satisfactory out of his nephew, during that visit, at least.

CHAPTER VI.

AGNES TREHERNE.

It was Sunday at Milborough, and the old cathedral town looked livelier than was its wont. Cathedral towns are not generally lively, and Milborough is no exception to the rule, even though it is the dépôt for two of the most crack regiments in her Majesty's service, and swarms with gay uniforms. But what is the use of uniforms looking gay when the wearers look dull? and who could not but look dull under the very eyes of the dean, prebendary, canons, vicars choral, and choristers of Milborough Cathedral? On week-days the town looked like the city of the dead; grass would certainly have grown in the streets, had it not been for the two market days, when stout farmers stood in groups about the High Street, blocking up the pavement, and turning all the ladies, without ceremony, into the gutters; and for Sunday afternoons, when the housemaids got their "turn out," and paraded up and down the principal thoroughfares, on

the arms of their young men. Why anybody, who was not absolutely obliged, ever resided in Milborough was a mystery ; and yet the families of both George and William Treherne did so. Mrs. Henry Treherne, that was the widow, because it was the head-quarters of her son's regiment, the 120th Lancers, and it was quiet and cheap, and suited her circumstances ; and Mr. William Treherne, senior, because his father had left him a handsome house standing in its own grounds, about a quarter of a mile distant from the town, and he had brought his bride home to it, and all his children had been born there, therefore he had an excellent reason for sticking to Milborough. But all the young people complained sadly of the dulness of the place, and were not at all satisfied with the half-dozen balls they had a year, and the occasional concerts got up by too enterprising music-sellers, which no one patronised, and which generally proved a dead loss ; all, that is to say, but Agnes Treherne ; I don't think she ever complained of anything. I think I told you before that it was Sunday, and the hour was four o'clock. The afternoon was intensely hot, and made itself felt even within the walls of the old cathedral, whose grey cloisters seldom admitted a ray of the sun's light, and whose stones, even in the height of summer, showed traces of damp and mildew.

The afternoon service was far advanced, the sermon had been drawled out by an aged canon, whose thick utterance would have sent all his hearers to sleep, had not the stiff, straight-backed, and narrow-seated pews prevented their making themselves so comfortable; and now the liturgy, our beautiful and never-to-be-excelled Church service, was being intoned in the same half-sensible manner by a dean of untold age, who, unable to see the words, and unable to recollect them properly, distorted half the meaning of our most effective prayers and praises, because he had not the good sense to resign an office he was no longer capable of holding, and there is no law by which he might be superseded by an abler man. The choristers were mostly asleep, falling against one another as their tendency to somnolency became irresistible, and waking with a guilty start, and a hasty glance towards some vicar choral, or canon, near at hand, who might have observed their actions; but I think few of those in authority over them were sufficiently wakeful themselves that afternoon to notice such failings, and if they had been, I think they must have been merciful; it was a very difficult afternoon to keep awake in, particularly for little boys after dinner. The droning voice of the old dean sounded through the vaulted aisles like a huge bumble-bee in

a bottle, and the chanted Amen after every prayer was scarcely more lively. Few resisted the influence. But of the congregation, two, I know, were wide awake; one of them a young man of about eight-and-twenty or thirty, with fair whiskers and moustaches, who was leaning back in one of the stalls, with his elbows on either arm of the seat, kept his bluish-grey eyes fixed determinately upon a pew, or rather the occupant of a pew, just beneath the pulpit. The woman he was looking at (for of course it was a woman) was Agnes Treherne. If you had not been told that she was the sister of the man I have described to you in my last chapter, I do not think you would have recognised any great family likeness; but when you knew the fact, you would have commenced to look for a similarity between them, and you would have found several. The first thing in which she failed to be like him was her height, for Agnes was a little woman; she had the same fair skin, and black hair, but her eyes were dark also, and there she lost a great charm which characterised him. The rest of her features were very like his, and taking her in all she was a very pretty woman; but whilst her brother's beauty was of that bright order that one must turn back to look upon, her charms came stealing on your perception one, by one, and the more you

knew and liked her, the prettier she appeared to you. And her face possessed what her brother's did not, and that was the beauty of goodness impressed on every line. As she sat in her high-backed pew that afternoon, how hard she tried to ignore all the absurdity of the preacher's tone of voice or the dean's attempts at chanting, although her acute sense of the ridiculous made both a keen trial to her nerves! How earnestly she strove to put away the worldly thoughts that would come intruding themselves into the very essence of her prayers! And once when she raised her head, and caught the steadfast gaze of the bluish-grey eyes opposite to hers, although a kind, loving look came into her own, and a burning blush spread itself over her cheek, she did not look that way again during the remainder of the service.

But when the sleepy choristers had roused themselves up to sing the glorious anthem, "Lift up your heads," which made her very heart and soul thrill within her, and the concluding prayers and benedictions had been said, she did not look at all prudish or reserved as the owner of the bluish-grey eyes, with a world of meaning in their light, waited for her outside the cathedral door, and drew her hand within his arm.

"I am on duty, Agnes," he said, pointing to the sword which dangled at his side, "but I can walk part of the way home with you. I am so glad you were here this afternoon; I only came to meet you."

"You shouldn't do that, Charlie dear, you should come for something better than me."

"I couldn't," he said, with more love than truth, as he squeezed her arm within his own; "let us walk home through the meadows, Agnes. Now, tell me why have you avoided me so much lately? you have made me so miserable."

"I have not avoided you," was her answer; "I have not chanced to meet you this last week, but I have felt it as well as you. You know how it is with me, Charles, my mother would not allow me to meet you with her knowledge, and I cannot do it without."

"Have you approached the subject with her again lately?"

"Several times; but it is always the same answer."

"How long is this to go on, Agnes?"

"Oh! don't ask me," she said, and there was a quiet sadness in her tone which was very pitiful to listen to; "I am as wretched about it as you can be, Charlie; I cannot think how it will end. You cannot know what my mother's temper is, how very im-

placable and unforgiving she can be ; she insists that it is your mother's part to make an apology to her, and that until it is done, she will not even hear of our engagement."

"But she has no power to prevent that, Agnes."

"Of course not," she answered, "and I never deceive her by pretending I think so ; but as long as she refuses to receive you at her house, there can be little pleasure for either of us."

"Certainly not," he said ; "I cannot understand how this feud originated, Agnes. I have spoken to my mother about it. She is a good-hearted creature enough, but it seems from her account—you mustn't mind my saying this, dear—that your mother grossly insulted her years ago, when you were little children, and it is my father who won't let my mother come forward and make the *amende honorable*, as I believe she would do, bless her ! even were she in the right, sooner than make me unhappy."

"Ah ! that's just the difference between your mother and mine, Charlie. I believe mamma knows perfectly well she was in the wrong, but still her pride prevents her even expressing a wish that old scores may be forgotten. What was the quarrel about, Charles ?"

"I don't exactly understand, my dear ; my mother

was delicate about telling me. I fancy it was something about her own character, poor old mother," he added, laughing.

But Agnes did not laugh, she coloured up, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Oh! what must you think of us," she said to her lover.

"Think of you, my darling? why, that you are the dearest girl in the world; only promise me, Agnes, this shall not go on for ever."

"For ever, is a long time," she answered, smiling. "Charles, how could I marry you without my own mother's consent, and when our parents will not speak to one another?"

"Are their quarrels to cut up all our happiness?" he asked fiercely.

"No, dear, I hope not, not for always, but just now, you will be patient, won't you, and not try to see me, except we meet by chance, as to-day; I'm trying all I can; and Charlie," she added, timidly, "I do pray that things may come right every day. I wish you would do the same, I should have great faith then."

The young man looked at her dark eyes swimming in tears till his own grew misty.

"I will, Agnes," he said, "at least, I will try to; I

do pray for you, dear, every night of my life; you believe that, don't you?"

"Of course I do," she said, "and I am so thankful to believe it. But why are you stopping, Charlie; must you go?"

"Must, my darling, my rounds are at five. When shall I see you again?"

"I hardly like to tell you," she said, "it seems so wrong without mamma's sanction, and yet I know there is nothing wrong in it; on Wednesday, at four, dear, in this meadow, and if I cannot possibly come, it shall be on Thursday."

"All right, dear; thank you. I suppose you've seen your brother? he returned last night."

"No, we have not seen him yet, he is such a late riser. I dare say I shall find him at home on my return. God bless you, my dear Charles, take care of yourself."

She tried to look gay as she bade him farewell, but the tears were still in her eyes, and on her cheeks. They were quite alone, and he kissed them away, and with a firm pressure of her hands, and an echoed blessing, he was gone. Agnes stood where he had left her, and watched his figure till it was out of sight. He was walking quickly away, for he had no time to spare, but his steps were not brisk, and his

eyes were bent towards the ground. She knew his thoughts were sad, and she felt her own were also. For one moment she asked her heart if she was right to make him unhappy, and herself too, for a question of doubtful duty, for there was no doubt that Mrs. Treherne's obstinacy in the matter arose solely from the exercise of her own temper, which went far to poison the existence of one at least of her children. But Agnes Treherne dismissed the doubt as soon as it arose. She knew that she was right in the present, and she left the future with a higher power. As she stood lost in thought, and still gazing, though he had long ago looked round to wave a farewell before he turned the corner, she felt a touch in another quarter; some one tapped her on the back with a cane, and turning round she encountered her brother George. By the rush of light which came into her dark eyes, and the fond, admiring look with which she approached him and laid her hand within his own, you might have seen that she was another of the women who helped to spoil and weary him.

"You, George?" she said; "how did you know I should be here, dear?"

"I didn't know anything about it, Agnes," he answered; "I came out for a smoke; and if I hadn't known your back, I might not have seen you at all."

"You could not have passed me," she said, "for I should have known yours. When did you come back, George?"

"Last night."

"Have you seen mamma?"

"No. I'm going there now with you. Who were you gazing after, in that fashion, Agnes?"

"Captain Digby," she answered. "He has been walking with me so far."

"Has he? I wonder he takes the trouble to walk with you at all: you treat him so badly."

"How?"

"How? You know well enough. You have no business to keep a man dangling after you half your life, without holding out any definite hopes of his marrying you."

"But, George, that is not my fault."

"Whose is it then?"

"My mother's, I suppose, for refusing to sanction our marriage."

"You are of age."

"I know that; but, George, how could I marry Charles when his mother will not speak to mine? We have been talking about it only now. He knows I am right: no happiness could come of it. Mamma persists it is Lady Digby's business to apologize to

her, and refuses to receive Charles till she does ; and you know what her temper is when she is once determined on a thing."

" I know it is a shame of you to indulge it as you do. My mother's temper is becoming perfectly unbearable. By Jove, she had better not try it on me, though ! I'd soon show her which was master. You give in to her in everything, Agnes : it's absurd."

" No, I don't," was her answer ; " but in this instance it would be downright disobedience. George, dear, I feel this quite as much as anybody. I am sure I would sacrifice anything for Charlie—anything that is right at least ; but I am sure the only right thing here is to wait and be patient."

" That's fine preaching to a woman, but it doesn't do for men. Digby will cut off and leave you, if you keep him waiting much longer."

Agnes turned pale at the very idea.

" I don't believe that," she said ; " but, even if he did, that doesn't alter the case. Think what I should feel, George, if anything were to happen to my mother, and I felt I had tried to secure my happiness at the pain of her fixed displeasure. You know what she is : she does not easily forgive ; she would probably never speak to me again. She may alter her opinion ; who knows ?" (and Agnes thought with

faith of the many prayers she had offered on the subject); "and in the meanwhile there is nothing to be done but to be patient, though you despise the idea," she added, laughing.

"Take your own way," was her brother's remark, as he knocked the ashes of his cigar away; "it's nothing to me: you are the best judge of what makes you happy."

"How did you find Uncle George?" said Agnes, willing to divert his thoughts and her own.

"Oh, pretty well; rather fidgety, as usual, but nothing worse. He seems very full of this new cousin of ours, Mademoiselle du Broissart."

"That's only natural, George, considering she is his own daughter's child, and found in such a wonderful way; but William told me he had heard from Mr. Ryder that uncle was very much distressed about her reappearance, nevertheless."

"Yes, I dare say he is."

"He is sorry for you, dear," she added, and she pressed his arm fondly; they were walking now towards their home; "and oh, George, I cannot tell you how I have felt for you, my *darling*." And she threw a fervour into the word which no italics or capital letters could express.

"Thank you, dear," he said, shortly; and then

there was a pause, and the brother and sister strolled onward together, each feeling that the other had need of all brotherly or sisterly sympathy.

The silence was broken by George.

"Agnes," he said, abruptly, "I'm going to apply for leave to go on foreign duty to Canada."

"Not really, dear?" she said, anxiously.

"Yes, really; why not? I feel restless and worried just now, and want something to stir me up. It will be just the thing for me."

"But what will mamma say?"

"Hang it! has she made her home such a comfortable one for me that I am to consult her before every step I take? If she had made Milborough a little more pleasant to me, I might not have wished to leave it. I should have liked to have seen you and Digby settled before I left England; but as it's not to be, it can't be helped."

"That will keep till you come back," she said, speaking cheerfully, though she did not feel so. "George, I can scarcely believe you are thinking of going. If you are bent on foreign service, I wonder you didn't apply to go to India with William."

His lip slightly curled at her ignorance.

"You know nothing about it," he said. "In the first place, I am not so particularly fond of William

that I wish to follow him wherever he goes; and in the second, if I did, I should be sent to Burmah whilst he remains in Madras. As if it were likely we should be together! You women really know nothing."

"I didn't know, certainly," she rejoined, good-humouredly; "I thought it natural cousins should wish to be in the same place. It will be a sad day for Milborough when you do go, George. Poor Dora! and I think I might add, poor somebody else!"

He looked thoroughly annoyed at her remark. "I wish to goodness, Agnes," he said, "you would not talk such nonsense; you know if there is one thing I hate above another, it is a remark like that. I'm sick of hearing them. If women will make fools of themselves, don't let me hear of it. Here I've just come back from Wales, where the charms of Mdlle. Hélène du Broissart have been sounded in my ears, to hear you commence upon the charms of somebody else."

"Oh! dear no; my remark had only to do with your own charms," she said, still laughing.

"If I have any I don't wish to hear of them," he rejoined, almost rudely.

"I wonder what this Hélène du Broissart will turn

out?" said Agnes, taking no notice of his tone. "She may be a very good girl, after all."

"I have no doubt of it," said her brother; "as good as the rest of her sex."

"Oh, George, you shouldn't speak disparagingly of women," said Agnes; "there's a great deal of good in them, though you may not have found it out."

"I certainly have not, my dear," he answered. "I have not very great faith in women, Agnes, as you know—not in their virtue, nor sense, nor anything; but you, my dear," he added, with a species of mock gallantry, "are a bright exception to my rule."

"I don't wish to be an exception," she answered, almost in tears at his words; "if we are all so bad, you can class me with the lot. I am no better, and no worse, than the rest of my sex."

"Come, Agnes, dear, I didn't mean to make you cry," he said, coaxingly, as he squeezed the hand which lay upon his arm; "it's all your fault, my dear, and the fault of such as you, that I am so rude: you women spoil me, Agnes."

"I know we do," she answered; "you are a spoilt child, George; we must try and amend our ways, but it will be very difficult," she added, smiling, as she looked into the handsome face bent over her, "it will be very difficult not to spoil a face like that."

"Bother the face!" he rejoined, hastily; "come, Agnes, here's the High Street; dry your eyes, or we shall be in the county papers next week."

And they did not renew the conversation until they came within sight of Sorel Cottage, the residence of Mrs. Henry Treherne.

CHAPTER VII.

SOREL COTTAGE.

IT was a *bijou* of a cottage in its way—very small, but detached; and, standing back from the road in a little garden of its own, it was completely hid from passers-by by the trees which rose above the low wall which skirted its boundary. The young ladies of Milborough had often looked at the green door which led to Sorel Cottage with envy, as it slammed behind the tall figure of the son of the house, and hid him from their admiring view. Not that I think he often honoured Sorel Cottage with his august presence, even though the entrance to his barracks lay just opposite to it, and he passed through that many times a day. Mrs. Treherne's fretful temper, and her harsh injustice to her daughter Agnes, had very much alienated her son from her; and as the affection which subsisted between the brother and sister (for Agnes was the only person in the world that George really loved) made her so jealous that she

only visited any expression of it the more hardly on poor Agnes afterwards, his visits to the cottage, except for short intervals, or when he had anything really to say, were few and far between. The interior of Sorel Cottage looked as though hundreds of pounds must have been spent on its adornment; and yet dozens would have been nearer the mark. Mrs. Henry Treherne was one of those women who can take a few yards of chintz and muslin and make a drawing-room look elegant at once. She had lived a great part of her early life upon the Continent, and she was as thoroughly French in her ideas and habits as a thorough-bred Irishwoman can be. She had been very pretty and piquant when Henry Treherne had first married her. There was an oil-painting hanging now in the tiny dining-room of Sorel Cottage which had been taken of her at that time, where she looked a species of Nora Creina, with wild, disordered tresses, and large, beaming blue eyes. So she may have appeared then, but I don't think she did so long. Poor Henry Treherne soon found out that Nora Creinas, however glowing and fresh, can have tempers of their own; and his Nora Creina made him feel hers to the day of his death. He had been a different disposition to his elder brother, not nearly so decided in character; his temper had been

like his daughter's was now, meek and forgiving, and he had always been more anxious to avoid a dispute than to prove the side he took in it the right one. So he had been bullied and ridden over by this fierce little Irishwoman, in consequence, till everyone knew he was a henpecked husband. Now she tried the same thing with her children; and though she succeeded only too well with her gentle daughter, I am glad to think that in her son she found more than her match, for he was her master. Where she would have vented her fretful ill-temper all day in snubbing Agnes, she took refuge in sullen silence before George. Her face still bore the traces of beauty; but its expression was so marred by the lines which indulged temper had cut deeply into it, that there was little else left there now. And yet this woman loved her children in her fashion; but it was a false, worthless love: she loved them for the pleasure she derived from them, not for the benefit she might be to them; she loved her daughter because she was an amiable slave, always at hand to minister to her wants or wishes, or to listen to her fretful longings after luxuries or things which it was not in her power to procure for herself; and she loved her son because she was proud of him, proud to hear his beauty praised and pronounced the true Irish type,

proud to have him known as the heir to Ariscedwyn, and to be known as his mother. The appearance of Hélène du Broissart had been a great blow to her pride; and poor Agnes had suffered for it in consequence.

George knew well enough that the idea of his marriage with the heiress would have been just the thing his mother would most have favoured. If she could, she would have sacrificed any happiness of his to have secured the estate to him; but he had no intention of giving her the opportunity even of trying her persuasion on him, for he was determined to keep his own counsel on the subject.

Mrs. Treherne had annoyed him very much for some little time back by trying to further a match between him and a daughter of one of the gentlemen in the neighbourhood, for no reason whatever excepting that she was one of the favourites which Mrs. Treherne was in the habit of suddenly lifting up and as suddenly letting down again. She had thrown Mary Fairfax in her son's way on every possible occasion, till she had really made the girl fancy herself in love with him, and in consequence miserable, because he never paid her any but the smallest attention. It was partly this folly which had kept

him away lately a good deal more than usual from his mother's house.

As he turned into the garden-door, therefore, on this occasion, and held it open for his sister to pass him, he did not look sweetness itself, as he descried the face of Mary Fairfax at the drawing-room window.

"Hang it, Agnes!" he cried, "there's that confounded girl there again."

"Oh, hush, George!" was her reply, but she laughed as she said it. Is a woman ever displeased, be she only a sister, to hear another slightly abused by the man she cares for?

"I won't go in," he said, decidedly.

"Yes, you must, George," said Agnes, in the same tone; "why, what would my mother say? She must have seen you from the window. I shall never hear the end of it. For *my* sake, do."

And so he suffered her to pull him along the garden-path, and into the cottage; but the greeting between the mother and son was not very cordial.

"How do you do, mother?" he said, as he barely touched her cheek with his lips, and bowed to Miss Fairfax, who was all over blushes and confusion at his sudden entrance.

Mrs. Treherne noticed the bow, and with displea-

sure; for her son's cool treatment of Mary Fairfax had been the subject of many a conversation between them.

"Well, George," she said, "I think you might have come a little sooner to see your mother, after an absence from Milborough."

"Not a very formidable absence of three days," he said; "I did not arrive till a very late train last night, and I've not been up long."

"Not up long, at half-past five? I don't believe it, George," said his mother, in an offended tone.

"I can't help that," he answered; "it's truth: I wasn't up till one, and then I had my breakfast; and you won't let a fellow smoke here, so I strolled out with my cigar, and met Agnes coming from church, and here I am. Now be thankful you've got me, mother, and don't let's have a row."

"I suppose you heard nothing more about this very unpleasant business of your Aunt Harriett's daughter?" Mrs. Treherne asked, presently.

"I believe I heard all that there is to hear. My uncle has not seen her yet himself; but he is going to Blackheath in a few days, and said he should run down and see you, mother, before he returned to Ariscedwyn: so you will be able to pump the old boy yourself."

Mrs. Treherne always professed not to understand slang. The least mention of it from another person was sufficient to make her retire from the conversation, although, when she chose, she could use it pretty freely herself. She showed her annoyance more now by the ill-tempered tone which she assumed in her next words than by any more tangible sign.

"If any of you want tea," she remarked, as she rose to quit the drawing-room, "you had better come in to it now; it's been on the table for the last hour." Which last statement was rather a stretch of fancy, as six o'clock had not struck yet.

As they crossed the hall to the dining-room, the slam of the green garden-gate was heard.

George looked out of the open hall-door.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "William and Dora! What on earth do they want here to-day?"

As he spoke he encountered Agnes's eyes, and they were laughing.

"Poor George!" she thought; "what has he done that he should be beset by both of them at one time?"

The cousins entered as they were seating themselves round the tea-table; all but George, that is to say, who was anticipating his mess-dinner, and pre-

ferred lounging on the sofa and watching the others at their meal.

Dora Treherne was decidedly not pleased at finding Mary Fairfax seated *en famille* at Sorel Cottage. There was a visible antagonistic feeling between these young ladies, due, no doubt, to the same nature which makes two dogs fight over one bone.

The greeting between William Treherne and his cousin was very cool. George rose and gave his hand to Dora, but William was fain to be contented with a nod of the head, and the remark:

"How do you do? Have you vegetated here for the whole week?"

"No; I was in town the day before yesterday, seeing about my berth. I'm off this day month."

The intelligence did not seem to affect any of his hearers particularly, as no one even remarked upon it.

"By the by, that reminds me," said George, "that my uncle told me to tell you that he has heard that two of Dr. Salisbury's daughters are going out by the same steamer as yourself. Did you tell him the date, William?"

William nodded.

"Ah, well, I was thinking it was more than I could have done. However, old Salisbury's daugh-

ters are to be your fellow-passengers, and perhaps you'll show them some attention on the voyage."

"All right," said William; "I may and I may not: it depends upon what they are like. Where are they going from?"

"Why, Miss Plimpton's, the boarding-school where Mademoiselle du Broissart is placed. At least, so I understood."

"Oh, boarding-school misses. I know the sort: red elbows, blue knuckles, and carrots. I shall take good care to keep out of their way."

"Which will be a very amiable return for all my uncle has done for you," said George, "considering it's about the only thing he has ever asked you to do."

"Well, I don't think *you* are so very fond of attending on ladies, cousin George, that you need talk," observed Dora, who was piqued at his want of notice of her. "Do you think so, Mary?"

It was an unlucky hit for poor Mary, who was so competent to judge of his indifference. She coloured up very visibly, and glanced shyly towards him, and for the first time a feeling like interest for her shot across him. His return glance at her was very kind, as he answered his cousin's remark:

"I hope I am never found wanting where politeness

is required, Dora. If you have never experienced it, I suppose you have never needed it. This day month, you say, William?"

"Yes; and indeed my reason for walking up here this evening was to say good-bye to aunt and Agnes."

"But why," asked Mrs. Treherne, "if you do not leave for a month?"

"But I am going into Scotland to-morrow, to my friend Campbell's, for some grouse-shooting, and shall probably pass straight through on my return."

"Oh, William!" exclaimed Agnes.

"Well, what now, my pretty coz?" he said, laughingly, as he turned towards her.

"Are you really going to stay away from home the last month, and when your father is so unwell?"

William looked a little ashamed of himself, and Dora said:

"I wish you *would* scold him, Agnes. Papa is quite put out about it, and William won't give up his project for him or mamma either."

"Well, why should I? Here I am going out to toil my life away in that horrid climate, and I am not to have a little pleasure before I start."

"But why couldn't you come back for a week before you sail, William?" asked Agnes.

"Why, because I can't: my plans are laid differently. It's only a crotchet my father has got into his head at the last moment. It can make no earthly difference to him whether he says good-bye to me now or not. My coming back for a day would do him no good, and only put me out considerably. Dora, you had no business to mention this subject. I'm sure I've had enough of it at home."

"Oh, well, never mind," said Agnes, hastily; "you must know your own reasons best, William."

But it was only a fresh trait of the utter selfishness which characterized all William Treherne's actions, and made him daily more odious to her.

"Well, all our farewells will be coming together," remarked George, presently. "I dare say I shall get my orders to march about that time."

"What do you mean, George?" said his mother.

"Why, that I'm going to apply to go to Canada, mother. I am sick of this life, hanging about this seedy old town month after month. There's nothing on earth to keep me here, and I want to see a little of the world."

Mrs. Treherne's way of taking anything that she didn't like was to get angry at the news. She really felt the idea of her son's leaving her very much indeed, but no one would have thought so from her answer.

"That's a complimentary speech to Agnes and me, George, I must say, when we settled at Milborough only to be near you."

This piece of news had caused much more unpleasant surprise than the preceding one. Dora Treherne got very red, and commenced playing with her knife and fork; and Mary Fairfax grew very pale, and dropped hers completely from her hands. Their actions made George feel particularly uncomfortable, and bless his stars he was going to escape from girls who made such fools of themselves.

"Well, you'll be settled here still when I come back, I hope," he said, in answer to his mother's remark. "I dare say I shall not be gone more than a couple of years."

"You won't stay out that," said Agnes, "if you ever do go, George, which I don't believe. You'll be pining for the opera, and the Derby, and the boat-races, and all your other gaieties, before you have been gone six months; and what would you do without music?"

"I don't know about staying," he said, "but I'm quite determined to go. William, you had better take uncle's advice about the Miss Salisburys: he says the old gentleman has saved lots of money; so perhaps he will come down handsomely if you will take one of them off his hands."

"Not I," answered his cousin. "Why, I'm going in for the heiress, as soon as I come home again. She'll be a great lady by that time."

George Treherne bit his lip. He had positively refused even to entertain the idea of marrying the heiress himself, but, man like, he didn't relish the idea of his cousin having her.

"What nonsense you talk," he said. "We seem sitting here doing nothing. Hadn't we better go into the other room?"

Mrs. Treherne had slipped away from the tea-table some minutes before. Her son's sudden announcement of his intended departure had upset her. She knew he was not one to change his mind easily.

"We must be going," said William; "we have dinner at eight. Come, Dora. Miss Fairfax, can I see you home?"

"No, thank you," said Mary's voice, but so changed and subdued in its tone that George involuntarily looked round at her. "My servant's coming for me later."

When William and Dora had taken their departure, George felt very much inclined to cut his mess and remain at the cottage for the evening, so much pity had Mary's sudden change of manner awakened in his heart, but, on second thoughts, he decided it

would scarcely be wise in him to do so; so he commenced a search for his forage-cap and stick.

"Where's Agnes?" he said, re-entering the drawing-room. Oh, pray don't call her, Miss Fairfax: it's of no consequence. Good evening." And there was a slight amount of pressure in the shake of his hand which accompanied the words. Then he walked out of the garden-door; but, just as he had got outside, he remembered something he had left in the cottage, and returned to fetch it. He walked into the sitting-room so suddenly that Mary Fairfax was not aware of his return until he stood before her. She was half lying, half sitting on the sofa, her face buried in the cushions. As she lifted it up at his approach, it was covered with tears. A woman in tears is generally a softening spectacle for any man to see, and Mary was a white, meek, innocent-looking girl, whom tears became.

You must not think that my hero was all adamant; he certainly did not feel like it on this occasion.

"My dear Mary," he said, forgetting in his pity that he was not used to call her by her Christian name, "what is the matter? Ain't you well?"

But she only buried her face again in the cushions, and burst into quite an hysterical flood of tears, as she ejaculated:

"Oh, George! George!"

He was in rather an awkward predicament: he scarcely liked to stand aloof from a woman in distress, and he felt almost afraid to go near her; however, he did approach the sofa and sit down near it, as he said again:

"What is it that distresses you so?"

She raised her tearful eyes again, and meeting his bent very kindly over hers, she exclaimed:

"Oh, George, I love you so! Why are you going away?" And then, as if just awakened to a sense of what she had said, a deep blush spread itself all over her face and neck, and she burst into a fresh torrent of tears.

George Treherne was a man of the world; he had been placed in various positions of difficulty and delicacy during his lifetime, but "hang me!" as he said to himself afterwards, "if ever I found myself in such an awkward plight before. I felt like a fool!"

But whatever he felt like, he didn't act like one. He kept quite quiet till her sobs had a little abated, and she had spoken again.

"How you will despise me," she said. Her words gave him the opening he wanted.

"No, indeed I shall not," he said, eagerly. "Miss Fairfax, this has been a piece of my mother's mis-

chief making. She had no right to throw us together as she has, and try all she could to make us fond of one another, when she had no reason to imagine that the attraction would be mutual. Will you forgive me for speaking so plainly? My heart has been too much engrossed with burdens of its own to have had the time to study your character, as it might have done. Had it been otherwise, there is no saying how this might have ended for both of us. Had I fallen in love with you, and you had rejected me, I might have been very unhappy, but I should have no reason to be ashamed of my love. Why should a woman be supposed to be of sterner stuff than men? It has been an unfortunate business; let us both try and forget it. I hope you will very soon."

"Then you don't care for me at all?" she said, presently, but still from the sofa cushions.

He could not deceive her; he knew he looked upon her as a perfect nonentity, but it cost him a good deal to bring out the next few words:

"I'm not worth any woman's wishing me to care for her," he said, avoiding a direct answer. "If I had been, I should have discovered your worth, Mary."

But she only shook her head without raising it.

"I'm going now," he said presently, as he rose;

"you'll go up to Agnes, and be cheerful, won't you?"

She started from her recumbent attitude, and seized his hand. "You'll never tell anyone?" she exclaimed, imploringly.

"No, never, by heavens!" he said. "What do you take me for, Miss Fairfax? I shall forget every word that has passed between us, or as good as forget them. And we shall be friends still, I hope; good friends, eh?"

"Oh, don't speak to me!" she said; "I can't bear it."

And so he left her, without further words, and walked slowly to his barracks. As he went, he worked himself into almost a rage. He was angry with her for being so foolish; angry with himself for being so flinty; angry with his mother for having brought such unpleasantness upon them both.

"Hang the women!" he thought. "I wish there were none of them in the world. Why, I've never spoken a dozen words, certainly not a dozen pleasant ones, to that girl during the whole course of my acquaintance with her. What on earth is their love worth, if it's taken by a face? I wish I was as ugly as sin; deformed, blind, anything, so they'd leave me alone. I ask nothing of them but peace."

Do you believe, for a moment, that he would have been what he falsely wished, even to get rid of those flatteries which are to all men so dear? I don't.

CHAPTER VIII.

HÉLÈNE AT SCHOOL.

MISS PLIMPTON had undertaken no light task in accepting the responsibility of the late education of Mdlle. Hélène du Broissart. When the circumstances of the case had first been made known to her by Mr. Treherne, and the question hinted as to whether she would receive her as a pupil, she had been fairly staggered by the proposition. To take a girl like that from amongst the lower classes of society, with her manners and principles, whatever they might be, of twenty years' standing, and to commence with her from the very commencement, seemed too formidable a task to undertake. The College, for that was the grandiloquent name by which Miss Plimpton's establishment for young ladies was known, had always been noted for the good birth and station in society of its young inmates—noblemen's daughters were numbered amongst its boarders—and Miss Plimpton viewed with horror the prospect of her school falling

off in name, as well as numbers, by the admission of so plebeian a pupil amongst its aristocratic students. What would the Countess of Carisbrooke, and Lady Montessor, and the Honourable Mrs. Ashton say, think, or do, if their daughters, grand-daughters, or nieces were contaminated by such contact? But luckily for Mr. Treherne there was another side of the question. There had been a connection, as he mentioned himself, whilst speaking to Mr. Ryder, between his wife's family and that of the governess, and it was simply this: Miss Plimpton's family was a good one, her father had been a clergyman, her mother, early left a widow with two little girls to support, had entered the family of the Actons, rich City people, as a governess, leaving her own children under the care of some of her friends. She lived there for seventeen or eighteen years, saw her pupils grow up and marry, and then began to look around her for some other means of support. But Mr. Acton was a benevolent, liberal-minded gentleman, and he would not allow her to take another situation. She was now past middle age, her daughters were grown up girls, like his own, and it was best they should be at home under their mother's care, so he started them in a house of their own, and enabled them to set up an establishment, which had grown and

flourished until it had attained to the "College" it now rejoiced in designating itself. Mr. Acton and Mrs. Plimpton had long since gone the way of all flesh, the benefiter and the benefited were alike dust, and even the daughter, Mr. Treherne's wife, had followed them, as we have seen. But still Miss Plimpton could not forget the obligations she lay under to the dead, and as far as she could she would have repaid them to the living. She was a middle-aged woman now herself, so was her younger sister; but there was more of the mother than of the old maid in her kind, placid features and the comfortable embonpoint of her figure. Their connection with the Treherne family had never ceased, even since the wife's death. Agnes Treherne had been educated for some years under her care, and many a pupil had been sent to her, on Mr. Treherne's recommendation, from friends of his own; so that when he asked her, as a great favour to himself, to receive his newly-found grand-daughter, and try what she could make of her, she felt she could not refuse. "No, not even if I lose half my girls by it," she said to herself, "for after all, I owe half of them to him." But still, to allow Mdlle. du Broissart to associate with her more refined pupils, she felt would not do; she therefore made every preparation to receive her in apartments

adjoining her own, and away from the dormitories and schoolrooms in which the young ladies slept and studied. This was easily done, as the College was built in a quadrangle open at one side, in the midst of which was a large grassy playground, in which the girls amused themselves between the hours of their study. Hélène felt very lonely and uncomfortable at first, she could not understand why she was to be kept from the groups of gaily-dressed young ladies who strolled up and down the playground arm in arm, or sat by themselves in shady corners conning the next day's lessons. She was not so uncouth and difficult to manage as you would imagine; she was full of unmannerly ways, and her strong Kentish dialect startled one at first, but when she was dressed in suitable clothing, and her hair neatly arranged, as long as she held her tongue, you would not have observed anything remarkably vulgar in her. She would have been what people call a fine young woman under any circumstances; that is to say, she would have possessed a loud voice, a firm step, and a figure approaching to stoutness for so young a person; and, joined to it, flashing eyes and teeth, and a complexion which would require very little indulgence to render it coarse and uncertain. She was naturally quick and clever, she soon understood

that the quieter she remained the more ladylike she appeared, and therefore she grew far less buoyant in her spirits and defiant in her temper than she was at Chelton Marsh. I doubt if she was happier, but I know she would not have acknowledged it to herself. Her pride in her new dress was something extreme, so was her delight in her looking-glass, but she felt the confinement to the house very much. She wanted to run out by herself and show all these fine things to the world. As she took her solitary walk with one or other of the Miss Plimptons, she was always looking round and about her, to see what the bystanders thought of her and her attire. She was quick at first to fancy every one was laughing at her, and not particular as to speaking, if she thought fit to speak, to any one whom she met. "Why, what are you looking at, man?" she exclaimed one day to a gentleman who turned his head after he had passed her, to his infinite amusement, and the horror of her companion, who wept at the very recollection as she related the incident to her sister. But A B C was the *bête noir* of Hélène's existence. She had a slight idea of reading, such as the penny-a-week dame school of Chelton Marsh could give her; but it was, as you may imagine, almost less use to her than none. She was not a girl to feel her ignorance and be glad to learn, her nature

was too full of conceit and of dependence on herself for that. She knew she was ignorant, but she could not bear to have the fact brought before her continually. She often sulked over her simple tasks, and as often refused to learn them at all. I dare say poor Miss Plimpton had a hard task to bear with her up in those rooms alone; I think she found it too hard after a little, for she began to look about amongst her pupils to see if there was any one whom she might trust sometimes to relieve her of her burden by becoming Hélène's companion for a few hours at a time. The girl was constantly worrying her to let her go down amongst the bright faces she used to watch in the playground; so one day she said to her, "I am going to bring a young lady to sit with you this afternoon, Hélène, I am sure she will be very kind to you, and I hope you will like her in return." She had singled out one of her senior pupils, a steady girl, not likely to be led away by anything she might hear or see, and who was soon to leave her, to join her parents in Madras—one of those very Miss Salisburys, indeed, of whom George Treherne spoke to his cousin William as about to become his fellow passengers. She was about the same age as Hélène, but they were a great contrast to each other—Grace Salisbury was so thoroughly a lady in every particular. As she

came in that afternoon, looking so fresh, and neat, and simple in her quiet muslin dress, and her work-basket on her arm, there was something in her look and appearance which made the other shrink from her. She saw for the first time what a refined, educated girl of her own age could be, and she felt her own coarseness and want of refinement more than she had ever done before. For H  l  ne was a lady by birth, there was good blood running in her veins, and though you may batter a delicately chased gold ornament by rough usage until it is a shapeless mass, it is still gold, and the metal rings true. H  l  ne had never associated with ladies, never been taught what it was to be a lady, but the metal was there. If at that period of her life, instead of only being anxious to take her place in the society for which she was not yet fitted, she had really studied to make herself capable of doing so, she might have done great things—great things I mean in comparison with the same attempt made upon one the course of whose blood has been muddied for generations past. But H  l  ne's natural want of humility forbade her taking proper advantage of the opportunities offered to her, as you will see. As Grace Salisbury advanced to her she shook her by the hand and said :

"Miss Plimpton says I am to sit with you this afternoon, Mademoiselle du Broissart, for fear you should feel lonely."

But Hélène had none of those little delicacies of speech at hand with which we return a complimentary action, and so she left Grace to continue her advances.

"Do you like Blackheath, Mademoiselle du Broissart?"

"I haven't seen much on it," the girl answered.
"What do they call you?"

"My name, did you say?" said Grace, smiling.
"Grace Salisbury."

"Do you live here?"

"Yes; but I'm going out to India soon. My father and mother live there."

"Where's that?" said Hélène.

Grace had heard from Miss Plimpton the account of Hélène's bringing up, and therefore this speech did not surprise her.

"Oh! a long way," she answered; "fourteen thousand miles by sea; but I am going overland."

"Further than Chelton Marsh?"

"I don't know where Chelton Marsh is," said Grace.
"Is that where you came from?"

"Yes; it's in Kent, a long ways from here,

though. I thought we should never have done with our journey when the gentleman brought me here."

"What gentleman, your grandpapa?"

"No; the lawyer. I haven't seen grandfather yet."

"Haven't you?" Grace was going to add, "How funny," but she thought it would be unkind. "I am sure you will like him," she said; "he is such a nice old gentleman. He is a great friend of my papa's; and when he comes to London he always comes down to see Miss Plimpton and us, and he has given us such nice presents."

Hélène's eyes showed great interest directly.

"Has he? what?"

"Oh! he gave me a fan last Christmas, and my sister a scent-bottle; and the Christmas before that, he sent us both such beautiful desks. I'll show you mine next time I come over here."

"Have you a sister?"

"Yes, two; only, one is in India. She is married, and got two little babies; but this sister is younger than I am by two years."

"What's her name—the one here?" demanded Hélène.

"Elfrida."

"Lor! what a strange name," said Hélène; "I never heard on it before. It isn't Kentish, anyway."

Grace laughed at her surprise.

"Well, I should think it stood a very good chance of being Kentish," she said, "for it is purely Saxon. It is a very old-fashioned name, but I love it dearly, because it is hers."

"Is she nice?" demanded Hélène.

"Very," said Grace, fervently. "Very nice, and very dear. There are all the girls turning out already. Why, it must be four o'clock! Now we shall see Elfrida, I dare say."

And the girls seated themselves at the window which looked into the quadrangle.

"I often sit here," said Hélène, "and watch you all at your games. I want Miss Plimpton to let me go down along of you all, but she won't. I think she is very unkind."

"Oh, she will soon, I dare say," said Grace, soothingly.

"I like some of the girls, and I don't like others. There's one I don't like at all. I say to myself whenever I see her, 'I hate you.'"

"But how can you tell, without knowing her," said Grace, "whether she is nice or not?"

"I'm sure she's not," said Hélène. "I know she would laugh at me if I went down there; she's always laughing; and she seems so mad, I can't bear

to look at her. There she is, now, coming out of the door. Don't she look mad?"

Grace looked in the direction Hélène pointed out, and her eyes and hands went up with horror.

"Why, Mademoiselle du Broissart, how can you say such things? That is my own sister, Elfrida; she is the prettiest girl here, and the dearest. Oh! how wicked of you to take a dislike to her, when she has done nothing to you."

"I don't call her pretty," said Hélène, doggedly.

Grace was too taken aback at this piece of treason to be able to answer it at all.

"Why, Elfrida never did harm to any one," she urged. "She wouldn't take a dislike to you from only seeing you at the window. Oh! I can't like you, Mademoiselle du Broissart, if you don't like my sister. You don't know how good and how sweet she is. No one ever spoke of her to me as you have before; my pretty Elfrida!"

And Grace's indignation at the outburst against her sister was very sincere. She took her work and sat far away from Hélène, and stitched in silence. When Miss Plimpton came to release her, and send her into the playground amongst her companions, she found her in that position.

"Don't you like her, my dear?" she asked, as she walked with her pupil down the corridor.

"No, ma'am, I don't like her at all," was the rejoinder. "I don't wish to sit with her again."

"No more you shall, my love," was the governess's answer; and she took with a sigh the burden of Mademoiselle du Broissart's company on herself for the future.

Hélène asked several times why Grace didn't come again to sit with her, but Miss Plimpton's invariable answer was, that she was engaged with her studies; so she was obliged to content herself with looking at and hating them from the window. But one afternoon, not long after this one, she had another visitor. When Miss Plimpton went into the drawing-room to receive Mr. Treherne, she could not help noticing how white and agitated he looked. She felt for him, for she knew the coming interview would be a very trying one.

"I trust, my dear sir," she said, trying to speak very cheerfully, "that you have not formed very glowing ideas of your grand-daughter yet. I have great hopes of what she may be, but the time has been very short. I have not had Mademoiselle du Broissart a month yet, remember."

"I do remember, my dear madam," he said; "and

it is because my anticipations are probably worse instead of better than the reality, that I feel so nervous of meeting my grand-daughter. I cannot express how much I feel your kindness in receiving her here. I only hope you may never repent it. I should like, if you please, to see her at once."

I don't think Mr. Treherne was disappointed at the first sight of his heiress. His anticipations had been, as he said himself, worse than the reality. Men go so much by the outward appearance; and Hélène, in her black silk dress, her dark hair plaited at the back of her head, did not present such an unpleasing picture as she advanced to meet her grandfather. She entered the room very awkwardly, but good-natured Miss Plimpton came with her, and strove to cover all her little deficiencies, to save her grandfather's feelings. When she hung back, and refused at first to go up to him, she begged him to attribute it to a natural shyness. Mr. Treherne saved a discussion on the subject by rising himself and walking up to the girl. He had trembled very much as he heard her footsteps approaching, expecting to see some vision of his dead wife or daughter burst upon his view; but Hélène was like neither. This young woman, not tearful, or agitated, or ashamed, but ready to giggle at the first interview with her nearest

relation, was not a grand-daughter to be soothed and told to look up and not be afraid.

Mr. Treherne had a repulsive feeling in his heart as he took the plump and still rough hand in his, and kissed the blooming cheek of Hélène. He felt as if she didn't belong to him, as if he should never feel as if she did. His questions to her, as to whether she liked Blackheath and her school, what she was learning, whether she would like soon to go and see Arisedwyn, drew forth such unwilling answers, that he changed the subject to that of Chelton Marsh, and sounded her as to whether she would like to go back there or not. But her vehement denial of such a wish, couched in such broad Kentish that he could hardly understand her, set his mind at rest on that subject, though it did not raise her heart in his estimation.

Then he gave her some presents he had brought for her, and the eagerness with which she selected a pair of earrings from amongst them soon showed him what the ruling passion in her mind must be.

He stayed with her for some hours, and the girl really behaved herself very well; but his face was sad as he passed through the gates of the College again. Miss Plimpton was sure he was annoyed, for he never even asked to say good-bye to his pets, the Miss Salisburys.

"You mustn't form your opinion from a first interview, my dear sir," she whispered, as she saw him to the door; "when I have had my pupil for twelve months, it will be quite time for you to look so grave about her."

"It wasn't that, Miss Plimpton; it is not her want of manners or education. I cannot explain why I think so, but I feel as if there must be something wrong there with her." And he tapped the left side of his waistcoat as he spoke.

Then he went down to Milborough, and paid a visit to his cousin, William Treherne's father, who was far from well, and listened to a list of grievances from the widow, many of which were remedied by the opening of his purse, and had long talks and walks with his nephew; but none of this seemed to cheer him up much, for the burden he bore in his own heart he told to no one, and sorrow unshared is doubled.

So he went back to Arisedwyn uneasy, he scarcely knew wherefore, but still determined, if he possibly could, to bring about the marriage of Hélène du Broissart with his refractory nephew.

CHAPTER IX.

CHELTON MARSH DESERTED.

THE September twilight was fast losing itself in the shades of night on the sands of Chelton Marsh. The sun was down, although the moon had not yet risen, and there was a softened and subdued aspect over all things. It was low tide, and the belt of white sand was at its broadest; little children, half clothed, were still paddling in the gentle ripples which ran up to meet their tiny naked feet, regardless of the repeated injunctions of shrill-voiced mothers calling them to bed; injunctions which would probably be followed by warnings more substantial, if not speedily obeyed. The fishermen were commencing to put out their boats, in order to set their night-lines, and lower, or take up, as the case might be, their crab baskets; some were evidently preparing to spend the night out, by the rough coats they put on, and the appearance of their wives in their train, bearing their suppers of bread and cheese and beer, put up in

hand baskets, to be carefully stowed away in some corner of the boat ; for there was a great deal of love amongst some of these rough pairs, and many a loud-voiced and apparently vixenish wife, made so by the necessity of enforcing ready obedience amongst the tribe of children which followed at her heels, would have given up her evening, and morning meal too—scanty though they were—to have kept her husband by her side all night, instead of on the treacherous sea, even though he scarcely threw a kind word at her all the time. At the door of John Read's hut, which stood right upon the beach, was seated his blind mother employed in knitting. You would never have believed her blind to have seen how fast her fingers went at her work, but she put her head on one side whenever any unusual noise attracted her attention, which showed you that she trusted to her hearing more than anything else to learn what was going on. At a little distance from her, seated on the shingles, mending nets, was her son—apparently mending nets, I should have said—for his work was lying across his knee, and his head was in his hands, and his eyes were gazing far out across the lands to some unknown world beyond the ocean. His whole air was one of listless dejection, and his eyes looked as if there was a weight behind their lids which pre-

vented their opening to their full extent. He had sat so for some time, lost in thought, and thought not of the most pleasant nature; and his mother's head had been turned two or three times in the direction of his figure, only he had been too absorbed to notice it. When she spoke to him at last he started greatly.

"What are you after, my boy? she said, "you are not working."

His mesh and needle were resumed in a great hurry, as he answered cheerfully:

"Yes, I am, mother. You're deaf, you know."

The woman shook her head.

"I ain't deaf, my son. When the Almighty takes away one sense, he quickens the others; and I can hear the beating even of my child's heart. It beats too fast, John, to be well."

The boy left his work, and came and threw himself down by his mother's knee.

"Now, mother," he said, "you just leave my heart alone. You are a great deal too sharp. How do you know it wasn't my gold watch now you heard ticking?"

"Your gold watch, child! Where should the likes of you get a gold watch from?"

"Well, I was up in the town to-day, and trying if

there was nothing to be got there, as would buy me a watch, maybe. How would you like that mother?"

"What do you mean, lad?"

"I have been trying for work, mother; this fishing don't bring us in nothing. I'm fit for harder work than this, any day."

"Nothing? Why, my lad, it brings us in food and drink."

The woman had laid down her own work by this time, as she waited in silent surprise for her son's answer.

"Food and drink, yes; but nothing to lay by. If I want to go to the next town, I must walk, I haven't a shilling to spare to ride, if I wanted it ever so."

"But you have your strength, John. What should you want with riding?"

"I might want to go further than the next town," he said, after a pause. The woman clasped her hands together.

"You ain't going to leave me, my lad?" she asked, imploringly. "You ain't going away from your mother, John?"

But the boy was silent.

"I mayn't be here long, John. There's something

in me seems to say, I am going after your father. I feel weaker every day."

And, indeed, it was true. The boy's dejection and loss of appetite had weighed wonderfully on the blind's woman's mind, who lived only in the welfare and happiness of this one cherished creature of her heart. She had always been weakly since the fever which had taken away her eyesight, and her strength had visibly decreased during the last month.

"You won't leave me, my son; you'll bide by your mother till the last? I couldn't live without your voice about the place."

"You rest quiet, mother," the boy answered. "I shan't leave you if you take it so to heart." But he sighed as he renounced his project. "I did ask about work up in the town this forenoon. I thought a strong fellow like me might be taking more as wages for farming work than I can earn with the boats; but there, if you don't like it, we'll go on as we have done, mother."

"Thank you, my son; it won't be for ever; if I was like other women, John, I might spare you easier, but you are my eyes, and my life, and everything. I've nothing but you and the recollection of your father to live on from day to day."

"Did you hear any news in the town?" she added

presently, when she had wiped away a few tears from her sightless eyes.

"None," was the curt answer.

"Why, 'twas market-day, child, wasn't it?"

"Yes, mother, it was, but I didn't go near the market; my business lay with Farmer Cross."

"Didn't you go into the town, John?"

"Yes, I did."

"What for, my lad?"

"I went to the post-office for Mrs. Willis, mother."

"Were there any letters for her?"

"No."

There was such a quiet misery in that "no," that his mother forbore to question him any more; she only laid her hand on the thick curls of his hair and stroked them softly and lovingly downwards. But the pitiful touch seemed to annoy him. He sprang up from his recumbent position and shook himself.

"Are you going with the boats, my boy?"

"No, not to-night, mother. Bill Ward said he would take my place in Brown's wherry. I've got other work to do; I'm going after it now. Do you want anything, mother, that I can get you, before I start?"

"No, lad, nothing. Will you be back to supper?"

"Yes, sure," he answered; and with a kiss he was gone.

He was a tender, dutiful son, but his mother's pity sometimes worried him. His young, proud heart scorned to be read like a woman's. He would rather have suffered by himself. But although he could act successfully before other people, to his mother he always seemed to be betraying his feelings. It was not really the case, but her overweening love for him made all his attempts to deceive her futile. Blind as she was, she could read the book of her child's heart better from the tone of his voice than others could from the play of his countenance. As he left her, and walked in the direction of the Farm Cottage, his very step seemed to have grown heavier and more dull. When he came to the spot whence he had watched the interview between William Treherne and Nell, he stopped and looked down upon the sands again. Yes, it was just there, where the cliff jutted out on either side, and made a tiny cove of sand. He could see her standing now in all her wild blooming beauty (it was beauty to him), defying his right to question any action of her own. What would he not have given at that moment to have had her back again, even to defy him? Anything, so he might see her and touch her. As the impossibility of it struck

on his heart, he gave a deep sigh and turned away. The month had, indeed, been a dreary one to him. There had only been one letter received by Mrs. Willis during that time, a few formal lines from Miss Plimpton, to say her charge had arrived safely at Blackheath, and desired her love to her friends at Chelton Marsh. John had little idea of how long it took to learn to write. He had expected a letter to arrive from Hélène herself day after day; and many a walk had he taken to the nearest post-town to see if one had come, for a postman was an unknown luxury in Chelton Marsh. But his hope had not yet been gratified, and his heart had become very sick. He often lounged about the Farm Cottage now; he loved to hear her name mentioned by Mrs. Willis, and to listen to that good woman's often-repeated assurance that their Nell would certainly visit them again as soon as ever the holidays began; for Mrs. Willis had been a nursery-maid in her unmarried days, and was learned on the subject of boarding schools, and the time of their vacations. Not that John Read disbelieved that his idol would return to his arms some day, but he loved to hear his hope confirmed by another mouth. As he entered the Farm Cottage to-day, he found Mrs. Willis very excited about something or other. He thought she might be

expecting he had a letter for her, so he hastened to put her out of suspense.

"There ain't no letter, Mrs. Willis," he said, sadly.

"Oh! ain't there though, my lad; that's all you know about it," was her brisk answer. He turned ashy white.

"Have you heard?" he asked, hurriedly. "Is she well and happy? Tell me, Mrs. Willis, do. Did she write herself?"

"Now, my lad, how can I answer all those questions at the same time? You rest quiet here a bit, and I'll tell you everything."

And she bustled up the little staircase as she spoke, leaving John Read staring after her from the kitchen. But as she disappeared, the conviction came to him that news had arrived of the woman he loved, and a prayer went up from his grateful heart.

"Thank God," he said. "Oh, my darling!"

Down bustled Mrs. Willis again, still all excitement, with a large brown-paper parcel in her arms.

"Now you shall see something, my lad," she said, as she deposited her burden on the table. "What do you think of that?" and, unfolding the wrappings of paper, she displayed a rather showy silk dress to his view.

"What is it?" he asked; "a gown?"

"A gown? I should think it was, John; and real good silk too. But stop a minute: what do you think of this waistcoat for my man, and this shawl, and these slippers? Ain't they beautiful? far too good for Chelton Marsh; and here's a whole suit of clothes for Charlie. I think we shall be smart for the Sabbath now; don't you, lad?"

"But the letter," he gasped.

"Lor! and if I haven't left the letter up-stairs; but I'll fetch it, my dear," and she left him again.

When she was gone he took a fold of the silken fabric and lifted it reverentially to his lips. *She* had chosen it, with fond thoughts of those she loved in Chelton Marsh. Nell was not forgetful nor ungrateful. Who ever thought she could be? He wondered if she had been too shy to send him anything for himself, and then reproached his heart for thinking presents or no presents could make any difference, when so much love had been given and returned.

"Did Nell write it herself?" he inquired, eagerly, as Mrs. Willis re-entered the little room with the letter in her hand. "You'll let me see it, Mrs. Willis?"

"Write it herself, my lad? why it isn't from Nell at all; it's from the old gentleman, her grandpapa, who sent us these beautiful presents."

His countenance fell dreadfully.

"Not from Nell?" he said. "No message—nothing?"

"Lor, yes, my lad; there's plenty about her, and she's quite well. Here, I'll read to you," and then she spelled through an epistle from old Mr. Treherne, written from London just after he had seen Hélène, in which he said he had found her quite well and happy at school; and he sent some remembrances to the Willises for their kindness to her, and hoped they would consider them as presents from their foster child as well as himself. And that was all. No promise of her return to Chelton Marsh; no hope held out of their seeing her again. The fact is, Mr. Treherne was not anxious her connection with Chelton Marsh should be kept up. He rejoiced at the distance between it and Arisedwyn, and studiously avoided all mention of a probable return to it on her part. Mrs. Willis was almost frightened at the effect the reading of this letter had upon her visitor.

"No message," he said, almost fiercely. "Not love, nor nothing, Mrs. Willis?"

"Nothing more than I have read to you, lad," she answered.

"They're keeping her from us!" he exclaimed,

bitterly. "They won't let her write, nor send us messages. Do you think they are?" he said, appealing to Mrs. Willis.

"No, my lad, I don't," she answered, soothingly. "She hasn't the time, may be; when she's her own mistress, she won't forget us, lad, never you fear."

"Hasn't the time!" he said, gloomily. "I haven't much time; but I'll make it. I must be going, Mrs. Willis. I thank you for what you've shown me."

"I'm very sorry there was nought more satisfactory for you, lad," she said, kindly; "but it will come some day, never fear. Nell won't forget Chelton Marsh."

"I've no fear of that," he answered. "Good night, Mrs. Willis."

"How's your mother?" she called after him down the garden path.

He had to swallow something in his throat before he could bring out his answer.

"Middling, thank you. She ain't so well as she was."

"Ah! take care on her, John; she's a good mother to you."

"You may well say that," were his farewell words, as he passed through the little wicket.

He did not go towards home; he walked some little distance out of Chelton Marsh, out of sight of the sands and the sea, into the heart of the country, and

then he stopped at the door of a public-house. It was a large public for so apparently lonely a spot; but it stood on the high road to Dover, and in consequence its trade was a very flourishing one. The "Three Jolly Farmers" was its name; and if it had been the "Thirty Jolly Farmers," it would have been nearer the mark, particularly on a market-day. But three or thirty, made no difference to John Read. He passed by the groups of men who were standing or sitting about the taproom without so much as noticing one of them. He did not go there to drink, though he did take off a glass as he entered, to keep his heart up; but he had never been accustomed to strong liquor, as his fine healthy body would have told you. As he drank his glass of beer at the bar, however, he put a question to the landlady.

"Is Peggy within, Mrs. White?"

"Well, she ought to be, John Read, if she's doing her duty. Do you want her?"

"I want to speak to her for a few minutes. May I go into the parlour?"

"Yes, if you promise not to hinder her. I wouldn't let you go there, if you weren't a connection by the mother's side. I can't have young men a-coming here to talk to her, instead of her minding the books."

I won't hinder her long, Mrs. White. I'll be back directly."

"Well, I shall expect you to take a glass as you come through again, in return for it," said the landlady, as she opened a glass door covered with a green muslin blind, and ushered him into a very small back room, where the young lady in question sat at a table making up the weekly accounts. She was, as had been observed, a sort of connection of John Read's, but she considered herself rather above the Chelton Marsh people, as she had been a domestic servant for some time, and was now a barmaid at the "Three Jolly Farmers." She was a well-looking woman of about thirty, and I think she had rather a weakness for John Read's handsome face, which made her stoop to be friendly with his mother for his sake. She did not look displeased as she saw who it was who ventured to interrupt her work.

"Are you come in for a chat, cousin?" she said, for by that name she usually called him, though they were no more cousins than you and I.

"Partly, Peggy; but mostly to ask for a favour. You know I can't write, worse luck."

"Well, John?"

"I've got a word or two I want to send to a friend of mine far away, and I came to ask you if you'd go

so far as to put it down on paper for me. I know you are a great scribe."

"Oh! I'll be willing enough, when my work's done; but you're a bit too early, John. Can't you wait till I've set down these figures."

"Oh, yes! I can wait, easy enough."

He sat down as he spoke on a chair at hand, and buried his face in his hands. Peggy stole many a glance at him, between the whiles of adding up her long row of figures, and entering them from a slate into the beer-book. Presently a sigh from her visitor made her look up and say, kindly:

"I won't keep you longer than I can help, John Read; I'm 'most finished now."

"'Twasn't that," he said, "Peggy, I was thinking of mother: she ain't well."

"Ain't she now?" said Peggy. "Twice four, eight, and two's ten, and fourteen's twenty-four; eight, one, four; yes, that's right. I'm ready, John: my book-work's over till this time to-morrow. Now what can I do for you?" And as she spoke she set herself, pen in hand, ready to write what he wanted on the table-cloth.

Then John began to feel sheepish. He commenced foraging in all his pockets until he produced a small roll of paper, very much crushed by contact with his

fustian clothes, which, being unfolded, showed one sheet of note-paper, one envelope, and a penny stamp.

"I got them to-day from the town," said he, as if to account for their appearance. "I knew if you wrote the letter for me, that you'd want something of that sort, not that I know much about it myself. Are they right?"

"Quite," she answered. "But stop till I fetch my letter-writer." And, disappearing from his view, she presently returned with a small pamphlet, in a green paper cover: it was entitled, "The Polite Letter-Writer; or, Guide to Elegant Correspondence." But it might have been a Greek volume for aught John Read understood about it.

"What's the good of that?" he asked of Peggy.

"The good of it? Why, man, that's what we write letters out of. You couldn't write, not to say properly, without it."

John looked very much puzzled, but presently he said:

"I don't rightly understand you, Peggy, and I'm afraid you don't understand me. I want a letter written to my friend; but I thought letters were a man's own thoughts, as you may say, only put down on paper. Now, how can you write my thoughts out of that book?"

"You don't understand, indeed, John," was the reply; "but I'll show you. Now, who is it you want to write to, a friend or a sweetheart?" she added, rather sharply.

"A friend," he said, in a low voice.

"A man-friend?"

"No, a woman," was the answer.

"You'd better have said a sweetheart at once," she said, in the same sharp tone, and turning over the leaves of her book. "Here it is. 'From a lover to his sweetheart. My dear ——.' That's the way to begin: 'My dear,' and a stroke after it. Give me your paper."

"But I don't feel that to be the way to begin it," urged John; "I want you to write just what is in my heart, the same way as I should speak to her if she were in this room."

"Well, tell me what's in your heart, then," said the woman.

"Peggy," said the boy, gravely, "if you are going to make fun of me, tell me so at once. 'Tisn't a light matter as has brought me out to the 'Jolly Farmers' to-night. Why shouldn't I tell you at once she is my sweetheart? and I'm parted from her, and I ain't happy; and if I could only write myself, I'd trouble no one to send her word of what I thought and felt about her."

"You're speaking of Nell Willis, I suppose!" said Peggy.

"The same, Peggy; and I can't get a word from her, of how she fares. Won't you help me?"

The tone was so imploring that it appealed to the woman's heart.

"Of course I will, John. Sit you down, and I'll write just what you tell me."

"Well, then," he said, seating himself opposite to her, "are you ready, Peggy?"

She nodded her head.

"Put first" (here he coughed and cleared his throat); "put first, Peggy, 'My darling.'"

"What?" she exclaimed.

"'My darling,'" he repeated, decidedly.

"I never see such a beginning as that anywhere in the 'Writer,'" she said, dubiously shaking her head as she proceeded to transcribe from his dictation; "it ain't grammar, I'm sure, John."

"I don't know about grammar," he said, in return; "I know it's love. It's what I always called her, and always shall, to my last day. Have you wrote it, Peggy?"

"Yes, John, it's down."

"'My darling,'" he proceeded, "'why don't you write? No, don't say that: she might think as I

thought her neglectful. Say, 'I want a letter from you sadly.' Does that sound reproachful, Peggy?"

"No, not if she hasn't written to you, John."

"She hasn't done that yet, that's certain," he said, sadly. "Say, Chelton Marsh looks very lonely like without her; say—oh tell her, Peggy, everything!—that every day is like night to me since she went; that I don't care for nought, that I can't sleep at night for thinking of her, that all my food seems bitter to me; tell her my life went with her," he exclaimed, with excitement; and then, ashamed of his own vehemence, he buried his face in his hands again, and the tears trickled through his fingers.

"You was very fond of her," said Peggy, softly, after a while.

"Ah, wasn't I? Well, Peg, a month's parting ain't worth tears, is it? but I hope you won't think the less of me for them. I'm over-tired, I think; I don't know how I came to make such a show of myself." And he drew his knuckles across his eyes as he spoke.

"Never mind that, John: of course you feel it," was her answer. "I've heard all the story from your mother. Shall I go on with the letter, John?"

"Yes, if you'll please to do so, Peggy. I feel more like a man now than I did." And then he dictated

the following lines, which took as long for Peggy to write as this chapter will to read.

"MY DARLING,—I want a letter from you sadly. You ain't forgetting me, I know; but send me word that it's true. I think of you always. The old place is very lonely without you, darling. We are all well, except the trouble. I pray God you may soon come back to your lover,

"JOHN READ.

"Write soon. My heart is sore for news of you."

Then the paper was folded and placed in its envelope, and directed according to the card which Mr. Ryder had left with Mrs. Willis, in case she wished to communicate with her foster child, and which John had extracted from a jar on the mantel-piece at the Farm Cottage, that very afternoon. Then John Read took possession of the letter, and placed it reverently in his waistcoat-pocket.

"It seems like a sacred thing to me," he said, "when I think it's going into her hands."

"Are you sure they'll let her have it?" inquired Peggy.

"Oh, yes! She's a lady now," he said. "What's the use of being a lady, if you mayn't have what you like?"

"If she's a lady now, will she care to hear from you, John?" was the next question.

But Peggy regretted she had asked it, almost before it was out of her lips. His brow overclouded, and the blue eyes grew quite dark.

"Of course she will," he said. "Don't she love me? Why, we're to be married as soon as she gets her own way. Do you think a bit of school larning would make such a difference in my Nell, that she'd go to forget me? But you don't know her, Peggy. Thank you for what you've done for me, but you don't know my Nell, to speak of her like that." And he passed through the glass-door into the tap-room again. I am afraid he took more than one glass, to please the landlady, or himself. He felt he wanted something to keep him up. His heart was still boiling with the imputation that had been thrown upon Nell's faith.

"My Nell forget me!" he said to himself, as he walked homewards, not too steadily, some hours afterwards. "No, hang it! who says she will? Let them come to me, and I'll tear their false tongues out for them. My Nell's as true as I am."

CHAPTER X.

YOUTH AT THE HELM AND PLEASURE AT THE PROW.

"I SAY, Grace, this is better than the Misses Plimpton at Blackheath, isn't it?"

The speaker was a young girl of about eighteen, and what was better than the Misses Plimpton at Blackheath was her first view of Malta as she stood on the deck of the P. & O. steamer, "Nubian," waiting for the boats which were to convey her on shore. Now to hackneyed travellers, and tourists who have used up everything, themselves into the bargain, Malta appears as nothing but a hot, dusty, badly-built, and still worse ventilated town, and Byron never wrote any truer lines than the wicked farewell he addressed to the place in question. But to the eyes of this young girl, fresh from Blackheath, I have no doubt the long white building of the Lazaretto (since she had never performed quarantine there) looked charming reflected in the water, and the grey-green, rugged steps (up which she had not yet

tumbled), formed a most picturesque landing-place, and the handsome mongrel boatmen, composed of a mixture of all nations, dressed in their full white trousers, striped jackets, and gay caps, with the awnings of their boats trimmed with every colour imaginable, and the prows gilt, seemed as if they had just stepped from the drop scene of the opera, into real life, for her delectation. But if Elfrida Salisbury admired everything she saw, I think the Maltese boatmen, sorry men though they were, must have felt some spark of admiration too, for the fair English face, which leant so far over the gunwale of the vessel, and yet she was not, at this period of her life, strictly beautiful. An artist would not have cared to paint her, unless, indeed, he required a model for her particular age; and yet none such could have viewed her, without foreseeing at a glance what a woman she would be, if she lived a few years longer. For though novelists will still persist in picturing their heroines as arrived at perfection at the tender ages of seventeen and eighteen, it is the greatest mistake they can make, for no female attains her full beauty for years after that. As Elfrida leant over the ship's side that morning, you could see that her hands and feet would appear much smaller when the limbs above them were more rounded, and her waist

slighter when the tender bust became more full ; her nose, too, wanted a few strokes from nature's chisel, Time, to bring its delicate lines to perfection, and the fresh cheeks were still too young and round to make her face an oval. But her eyes ; would Elfrida's glorious grey eyes, with their dark lashes, ever look more lovely than they did now, untouched by care, undimmed by tears ? And her hair, perhaps that too, was at its height of beauty, with its golden brown hue, and its natural ripple which no amount of water, or pomade, would smooth away. Elfrida's hair was a by-word. She plaited it, she curled it, she twisted it, she could do everything with it but stow it away, it was always coming down, no amount of combs or hair-pins could keep it in its place ; but as its texture was fine, and its colour lovely, perhaps people grumbled less at finding it constantly in their tea-cups, or over their bread-and-butter, than they would otherwise have done ; at all events the male portion of the community. One thing I can vouch for any way ; whatever its inconvenience, it was all her own.

"Now, doesn't it all look pretty, Grace ?" she continued ; "I do feel so jolly."

The Grace she addressed, her sister, and two years her senior, might have been Elfrida matured, but not

improved, had such a thing been possible, which it is not; women always improve at that age, and Grace had doubtless at eighteen been much worse looking than she was at twenty. Though she was pretty enough now, apart from her sister, and there were some who thought her quiet face the best looking of the two.

"It is very pretty," she answered, "but I hope you won't go mad again to-day, Frida, as you did at Gibraltar last week."

"Oh! I intend to, I can assure you; why shouldn't I if I like? there's no harm in it. Mr. Treherne says Malta is twice as much fun as Gibraltar, and there's an opera-house there. I wish the captain would stay over to-night, and let us go to the opera. Oh! I say, Grace, look at the boats, six coming all together; which shall we go in? I must go with you, you know; shall we have that handsome man with the blue cap, or the one in the red and white? Oh! we'll have the blue. Mr. Watson, I'm going in the boat with the handsome man in the blue cap."

"All right, Miss Salisbury," said the gentleman she had addressed; "lucky fellow in blue, I wish I was he. Are you ready to go now, shall I hail a boat?"

"Yes, we are all ready, ain't we, Grace? I have the shawls, and you have the little leather bag."

"My dear Frida, we can't go without Mrs. Canning, she is not up on deck yet."

"Oh, bother Mrs. Canning," said her sister. "Why are we to wait for her and those horrid children?"

"Frida, you mustn't speak in that way," replied Grace, reproachfully. "You know we are under Mrs. Canning's care, and she is very kind in going about with us. I'm sure she didn't like your leaving her, as you did at Gibraltar, and as for going on shore without her, I couldn't think of it."

"Well, it's a great bore, then. I wish there were no such things as chaperones; they are so stupid. Mr. Watson, my sister says we can't go without Mrs. Canning; isn't it tiresome?"

"Oh, hang Mrs. Canning!" replied Mr. Watson.

Poor Mrs. Canning! she stood a bad chance between the two.

"Really, Mr. Watson," said Grace, "you shouldn't encourage Elfrida in such nonsense. She knows she must wait, whether she likes it or not, so she had better do so with a good grace."

"Couldn't you stir up your friend, Miss Salisbury, and tell her your sister is waiting?"

"Ah, well," she replied, "that is reasonable, at all

events; so I will go and do my best, Mr. Watson;" and Grace, always ready to do her best for everybody, disappeared down the companion ladder in search of Mrs. Canning. She found that lady in her cabin, very hot and very busy, nursing a voracious baby, who never seemed to get tired of his mother, whatever she felt with regard to him. The greatest relief appeared on her countenance as Grace entered the cabin.

"My dear," she said, "I am so glad you are come; I can't leave the children, and that tiresome ayah has gone away again. I shall never get on with that woman, Grace. I am sure the lady who had just brought her home, and from whom I took her, must have told dreadful stories, for she said she was so useful on board ship, and she won't do a thing!"

"She wanted to get rid of her probably," said Grace, with a smile.

"Yes, dear, I suppose that was just it, but it's very tiresome for me. Could you amuse Freddy for a few minutes on deck for me? he always cries so whenever I nurse his brother."

"But I came to ask you when you will be ready to go on shore, Mrs. Canning, the boats are alongside."

"What, already? oh, dear! I didn't expect to go

for an hour at least. I must nurse baby first. Can't you wait, Grace?"

"Oh! I shouldn't mind," was her ready answer, "but Elfrida is rather impatient. She couldn't go without you, could she?"

"Oh, no, my dear; it wouldn't be proper. I really will make as much haste as I can. Could you find the ayah for me, Grace, and take Freddy with you; and I'll dress baby as soon as he will let me. What makes your sister in such a hurry to go on shore?"

"Nothing in particular; she is always impatient, and the boys tease her and make her worse."

"Not more than she does them, do they, Grace?"

"Well, I think it is six of one, and half-a-dozen of the other," replied Grace, as she caught up little Freddy, and left the cabin in search of the ayah. As she toiled up the companion stairs with her burden, Elfrida caught sight of her.

"There is Grace, of course, acting nursery-maid, instead of making Mrs. Canning go on shore. Is she coming, Grace?"

"I shall not tell you, if you begin by abusing me, when I am carrying about this heavy child all on your account. Be patient, Frida, she won't be long now." And finding her way to the forecabin, she descried the missing ayah quietly smoking as she

reclined on the deck, with no thought of children or mistress in her head. When Grace rebuked her, she evinced no surprise, and offered no apology. She only rose, put away her pipe, took the child in her arms, and returned with him to the cabin. The move was so far satisfactory, that in the course of another half-hour, good-natured Mrs. Canning appeared on deck, still hot and flurried, but with her ayah and two children in tow, and ready to go through her duties as chaperone to the Miss Salisburys. Elfrida still lounged over the side of the vessel, surrounded by a group of young men, all paying her compliments, and vying with each other to anticipate her wishes. I have no doubt it *was* much nicer than the Misses Plimpton and Blackheath. As soon as Mrs. Canning announced her readiness to leave the vessel, Miss Elfrida Salisbury found there was something missing necessary to her comfort.

"Where is Mr. Treherne?" she said; "he must go with us."

"Oh, never mind Treherne," replied one of the gentlemen in attendance, to whom the anxiety for Treherne was not palatable; "he'll come all right; he can follow us. Come along, Miss Salisbury."

"But I can't go without Mr. Treherne; I promised him not; besides, he has got my purse, and we

should never meet him all day. I must wait for him," said Elfrida, with great decision.

But the arguments were cut short by the appearance of Mr. William Treherne himself, who issued from his cabin, looking very much as we have seen him before in these pages. As he advanced towards the party on deck, his thoughts were evidently directed, like his looks, to only one person there.

"I am so sorry I am late, Miss Salisbury," he said, addressing Elfrida. "I hope I haven't put you to any inconvenience. I was obliged to have a box up from the hold before I could get anything cool enough to wear in this climate."

Elfrida forgave him very graciously, and as if she was the chief person to whom the apology was due; and as they prepared to get into the boats, she was escorted down the ship's side by two gentlemen in front, to prevent her petticoats disclosing her ankles; two gentlemen behind, to prevent her falling into the water, and William Treherne as advanced guard, laden with her shawl, her parasol, and her purse; whilst poor Mrs. Canning, and dear, quiet Grace were quite content it should be so, and only too glad to secure the services of the first officer, to see that the ayah, the children, and themselves were not quite left behind. Then, of course, when they were seated,

it was found that Elfrida was in the other boat, with half-a-dozen cavaliers, but Mrs. Canning decided that it didn't signify "just to the shore," so the other boat shot off before them, and her clear ringing laughter—ringing, but not loud,—was heard continuously over the quiet waters of the bay, as the breeze brought it back to their ears. When they reached the landing-place, Elfrida was already in the midst of mighty efforts to scale the slippery steps, with the assistance of ten extra hands at least.

"Oh, Mr. Treherne, don't pull so! I know I shall tumble down. Mr. Watson, you're pushing too hard behind! I wish I had trusted myself to Mr. Cameron instead. Pray don't make me laugh so! I can't keep up any longer! Grace, how are you getting on? Oh! I've hurt my knee. Oh!"

Which last exclamation was very prolonged, in consequence of William Treherne having given her one final haul, and landed her safely at the bottom of that flight of stairs, the ascent of which is not to be envied. But they were all tolerably young, and I think the poor ayah grumbled at them the most of any. As for Elfrida, double that number of steps would not have damped the stock of ardour she had brought out with her for the day. Her spirits literally ran over with mirth and innocent jesting; even in the

various churches they visited, low gurgles of suppressed laughter were continually heard from her, as Mr. Treherne, or Mr. Watson, or Mr. Somebody else said something that was really too killing. In the beautiful church of St. John's, Grace turned round to her with a grave rebuke.

"In a church, Frida, dear; pray remember!"

"Well, it's only a Roman Catholic one," was her careless answer.

"That makes no difference. You shouldn't come in at all, if you wish to talk and laugh."

"Oh, then, let's go outside," suggested William Treherne; and so outside they went, and flirted in the porch until Mrs. Canning and Grace joined them again. The purses were in great request, as they visited the various French shops there, for lace, and coral, and jewellery; and Elfrida wanted William Treherne to give up hers, but he persisted in being her treasurer, and paying for her.

"Oh, no! I won't have that," she answered; "you will spend too much, and then I shall have none left; and I'm not to have any more money till I get to India; so give it to me now, for I want to pay for myself."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. You forget how many times I have been here before. I know the

value of these things better than you do. Isn't that a nice bracelet?" he said, taking up a beautiful specimen of red coral, carved as a snake.

"Yes; lovely."

"Why don't you have it?"

"Oh! I don't think I could afford that; it would be very expensive. I'm not rich; so I mustn't be extravagant."

"Will you take it from me?" he whispered. "Let me give it to you."

"Oh! dear," said Elfrida, and her eyes sparkled. "I should like it so much; but I don't know whether I ought to. Perhaps——"

"Nonsense. Why shouldn't you take it from me as well as anybody else. I shall get it for you."

"Frida," said Grace's voice, "do come here;" and then, as her sister approached her, she whispered—

"Oh, Frida, you are not going to let Mr. Treherne buy that bracelet; are you? You mustn't take it from him, Frida. Papa and mamma would be very angry to hear that you had done such a thing. You know how particular they begged us to be in our behaviour going out; and I am sure taking presents from gentlemen is not what they would approve of."

Elfrida looked sadly disappointed.

"Oh! Grace, do you think there would really be

any harm in it? it is such a beautiful bracelet, and I've known Mr. Treherne a long time now, you know."

"Just a fortnight, dear. No, Frida, you really mustn't think of taking it; pray don't."

Elfrida turned to the counter again.

"No, thank you, Mr. Treherne; I'd rather not have it. I think it's lovely, and it's very kind of you to wish to give it me; but Grace thinks I had better not. She says papa would be angry."

"What a bore Grace is," said William Treherne, in an annoyed tone; but never mind, Miss Salisbury, I shall buy it for myself." Upon which he spent about ten pounds on the purchase of the bracelet and pocketed it.

But Frida's spirits were damped by this little occurrence, and she thought Grace unkind for having prevented her acceptance of the trinket. She said to herself that it was jealousy, because Mr. Treherne had not offered her one. You see I am not afraid to tell you of her little faults, because she had such great virtues to counterbalance their defects, that I know you will love her notwithstanding, before my story is concluded.

When Mrs. Canning and the girls had completed their modest purchases of coral and lace, in which nothing like ten-pound bracelets figured, they pro-

ceeded to do the rest of Malta in orthodox style, visiting the tapestried chamber in the governor's house, and the armoury, where the helmets and cuirasses of the first Knights of Malta were pronounced too small even for Elfrida's slight figure, eating ices and meringues at a restaurant, and finally driving some distance into the country in wonderful calèches, between which and the animals which drew them there was maintained such a respectful distance, that it seemed as if the horse was trying to run away from the carriage, and the carriage was trying to catch the horse. But when people have been on board ship for only a very short time, they are disposed to make light of grievances on shore, and to laugh at what under other circumstances, they would be disposed to grumble at. So Grace and Elfrida and Mrs. Canning, backed by the ayah, the children, and the boys, laughed at everything that was unpleasant, voted all that was pleasant charming, and found themselves at four o'clock, again upon their feet in the hilly streets of Malta, and making a descent for the flight of steps which should lead to their point of embarkation.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EXPENSIVE PUPPY.

"STOP, Grace, don't walk so fast," cried Elfrida, who was loitering behind with her admirer, Mr. Treherne. "I am so hot and tired."

"You must come on, Frida dear; Mrs. Canning is ever so far in front, and she wants to get back on board for the children's tea. Make her come on, Mr. Treherne, please. All the others are going down the steps."

But at this moment a man approached them with two or three little puppies, washed white as snow, with coloured ribbons round their necks, regular puff balls, warranted to be real Maltese lions, and to grow no bigger than they were at present. They were too much for Elfrida.

"Oh, Grace, you must stop till I look at these sweet little dogs. Oh, how much are they, do you think?" she asked, with more charm in her looks than

grammar in her words, as she turned to William Treherne.

"Would you like one, Miss Salisbury, to take to Madras with you? I'll get one directly, if you would. Which shall it be?" he added, commencing to pull the puppies about, whilst their owner began a long eulogium on their breeding, in Italian patois.

"You couldn't have it on board ship, Frida dear," urged Grace. "Captain Nelson wouldn't let you, unless you paid for it, and you can't do that. Do come on, Frida; we shall be keeping Mrs. Canning waiting."

"Oh, Grace, I think I could smuggle it on board, and keep it in our cabin; it is such a little tiny. Oh, the little dear; I should so like it. I should like them all," she said, as she took three puppies in her arms at once.

"Grace," called Mrs. Canning, "do come on; the boat is waiting."

"I must go," said Grace. "Come, Frida."

"Yes, directly; I will in a minute. You go, Grace, I'll catch you up. Which is the prettiest, Mr. Treherne?"

"You must decide that, and I'll make the bargain for you."

"Oh, but I must pay for it!"

"Certainly, if you wish it; but I know this man, he'll let me have it for a song," was his ready lie.

So the purchase was completed by William Treherne paying five shillings out of Frida's purse, and one pound fifteen out of his own.

"And now we must make haste to the boat," she said, as she held the precious puppy she had, after much deliberation, selected, close to her bosom. "This way, isn't it, Mr. Treherne?"

But William Treherne had an idea in his head; he had no intention of paying for coral bracelets and white puppies for nothing, as you will see.

"No, not that way, Miss Salisbury; I'll show you a shorter cut than that, that won't tire you so much. Come round this corner."

"Are you sure that it's shorter?"

"Quite sure."

So Frida followed him, with her dearly bought puppy in her arms (oh, what an expensive puppy that proved to her!), just in the opposite direction to where the steps led down to the water's side. In the meantime, Mrs. Canning and Grace, with the other young men, were waiting with impatience for their arrival at the bottom of the stairs, for you cannot see beyond the first flight when you are on the landing-place.

"What can have become of them, Grace?" said Mrs. Canning, when nearly half an hour had elapsed. "Did they say they would follow us?"

"Yes, I understood them so," answered Grace, vexed at her sister's thoughtlessness; "it is very provoking. I suppose they are still deliberating about those wretched puppies."

"I hardly like to ask you, Mr. Watson, to climb up all those tedious steps again, but if you wouldn't mind it, I should be so much obliged if you would see if they are coming," said poor Mrs. Canning, presently.

Mr. Watson didn't much like the trouble, because Mr. Treherne had rather put his nose out of joint that day, but he could not do less than say he would be very happy. But he returned after a short interval, taking three steps at a time in his headlong descent, to say he couldn't see them anywhere.

"How extraordinary," said Mrs. Canning; "where can they be?" and "Oh, how thoughtless of Frida!" sighed poor Grace, as she felt almost as if she had committed the breach of etiquette herself.

"What are we to do?" asked Mrs. Canning; "I must get back on board for the children's tea; Freddy is so cross already, and I don't like baby to be on the water in an open boat late. Could you see no signs of them anywhere, Mr. Watson?"

"Well, I didn't look for their footprints, Mrs. Canning, and I didn't see themselves, or I should have brought them back with me. I'll tell you what we had better do—go on board. I expect they've gone already, for the dog-seller told me they had walked in the direction of the other landing-place. You'll find them on deck when you get to the steamer."

"Do you really think so? Well, we had better go then, Grace; it's very wrong and very careless of Elfrida; but I cannot wait about half the evening for her like this. Mr. Watson, will you hold Freddy whilst I get into the boat? Thank you," as he took the child from her arms. Grace was very unwilling to start without her sister.

"Couldn't I wait, Mrs. Canning, with one of the gentlemen, and go in search of Elfrida. I should feel more comfortable; she may be still on shore. You could go back with the children."

"You wait, my dear Grace? oh! dear, no, that would only make matters worse. I'm convinced Mr. Watson is right, and they will be most likely on board before us; but I must give Elfrida a good talking to when I see her, for I will not take her on shore again if she won't be more amenable to my wishes. I don't know what your father would say to such wildness."

And Mrs. Canning stepped into the boat, and was followed by Grace and the rest of the party.

In the meanwhile, Elfrida and William Treherne were walking down a pathway which led to a small wharf or jetty, and over the garden walls on either side hung fragrant branches of orange trees in full blossom. Treherne leaped frantically at the boughs till he had hooked them down with his walking-stick and secured large bunches of their flowers. Elfrida was delighted with them at first, and put them in her hat and bosom.

"How lovely they are," she said.

"Yes, and so are you," he whispered; "I wish you'd let me put them all round your head, Elfrida."

She understood the double meaning, and it did not seem to please her, for her brow contracted, and she plucked the sweet-smelling bouquet from her hat, and threw it in the dust.

"I hate nonsense," she said, hastily, and then fell into conversation with her puppy to prevent his answer. But presently she lifted up her eyes, as they came upon the landing-place.

"Why, Mr. Treherne, where are the boats?" she said.

"Boats; by Jove!" was his answer, "you don't mean to say there are no boats here? How very stupid

of me not to have asked first; I'm sure they used to have them when I was here last. I'm afraid we must retrace our steps, Miss Salisbury."

"Oh! Mr. Treherne, how sorry I am I came; how late we shall be! What will Mrs. Canning say? Pray let us walk fast," and she commenced a rapid ascent again to the town.

But when they arrived at the bottom of that celebrated flight of steps, you may be sure their party was already gone. Elfrida thought they must have re-entered the town to seek her, but Treherne commenced a rapid conversation with the boatmen in Italian, and soon found out the true state of the case.

"They're gone, Miss Salisbury," he said, in answer to her looks of inquiry, "they've been gone half an hour. I'm very sorry, but it's not my fault; I thought we should have caught them."

She did not know he was saying what he knew to be false. She thought he had really made a mistake.

"What shall we do?" she asked, with great anxiety in her tone of voice.

"Do; oh! there's nothing easier, we'll take a boat and follow them: we came to the shore without them, Miss Salisbury, I dare say we shall get back just as well; but don't go just yet, it's so early."

"Oh! I'd rather go, Mr. Treherne; Grace will be so anxious to know what is become of me."

"Oh! nonsense, she knows by this time that you're not there; an hour or two cannot make any difference. I think it was most inconsiderate of them going off so early; who ever heard of leaving Malta at four o'clock in the afternoon? why it's absurd."

"I suppose Mrs. Canning wanted to get back because of the children," said Elfrida. "I ought not to have left them, Mr. Treherne."

"Well, it was a mistake. It was all my fault. I shall tell Mrs. Canning so. But as it has happened, there can be no harm in our having another little walk before we go back; that is, if you are not tired; for this is the best part of the day here."

Elfrida was not in the least tired. When was she? She knew she had better return on board; but then it was so nice being on shore, and the air was getting so deliciously cool, and what difference would an hour make after all? She looked very lovely in William Treherne's eyes, as she stood deliberating, her graceful figure poised against the rock, her cheeks flushed with excitement, one thick coil of her sunny hair lying over her shoulder, and the bunch of orange blossoms still in her bosom.

"Come, Miss Salisbury," he said, "haven't you decided yet?"

"I should very much like another stroll through the town. You know I may never see it again," she said, smiling; "that is to say, if you are sure it wouldn't be wrong."

"Wrong," he echoed; "nothing's wrong that's pleasant." With which dangerous piece of sophistry he took the young girl's hand, and led her once more up the stairs which lead to Malta. They lounged through the town again, and passed the places and shops, they had entered before, and then they retraced their steps to the water's side through the pathway of orange trees, and sat down on one of the benches there, close to the water's edge.

"I should like my shawl, Mr. Treherne, please," said Elfrida; "it is getting quite chilly, and poor little pup is shivering. There's a breeze getting up, isn't there. Look how the old 'Nubian' is rocking away out there."

"It does look rather squally out at sea," he replied, as he put the shawl over her shoulders; "but I dare say it will pass over. It's nice and cool here, isn't it?"

She assented; it certainly was much cooler than it had been. The sky had overclouded, and the waves

of the sea looked turbid and much higher than they were before.

"Look here, Miss Salisbury," said Treherne presently, taking the coral bracelet out of his pocket.

"What am I to do with this thing?"

"I'm sure I don't know," she said, fondling her puppy.

"I bought it for you, you know; and you must have it. It's all nonsense making a fuss about taking it. Why, it's a thing that is done every day."

"Is it?" said Elfrida, opening her eyes; "but Grace would scold me so. She said it wasn't proper to take it from a gentleman."

"What does Grace know about proper or not proper, I should like to know? She's no judge. If you won't have it, I shall throw it into the water. It's no good to me;" and he prepared apparently to suit the action to the word.

"Oh! no, Mr. Treherne, pray don't do that," cried Elfrida. Ten pounds seemed a fortune to spend upon a bracelet, and then to see it wasted. "Oh, pray don't. I'd rather take it than you should throw it away."

"Well, take it then," he said. "Where's your arm?" and seizing that member, he clasped ten pounds upon

it, and imprinted a kiss on the white skin at the same time.

Elfrida blushed, but she didn't like to make a fuss about such a little thing, after accepting so handsome a present.

"Oh! thank you, Mr. Treherne," she said; "it is so beautiful. I never had such a lovely bracelet before. I do like it so much; but if Grace should think it very wrong indeed of me to have taken it, then you will let me give it you back, won't you?"

"No, indeed," he answered; "you may throw it away, if you like; but my hands don't touch it again. But I'm afraid there's a storm coming on, Miss Salisbury. I really think we must see about a boat before it's too late;" and so they returned once more to the boats and the boatmen. By that time the sea had risen very much, the sky looked nearly black, and the waves began to show their white crests. Elfrida was nervous, and even William Treherne foresaw trouble. Directly he commenced talking with the boatmen his countenance fell. Then his voice rose, and he seemed almost quarrelling with them as they shook their heads, and answered his excited expostulation.

"What is the matter," said Elfrida, frightened at his manner.

"Well, the matter is this, that they won't go, Miss

Salisbury. They say it's dangerous to put out their boats in this sea, and I know there is danger in rounding the point. I'm afraid there's nothing to be done but to stay here till it is a little calmer. I dare say the squall will blow over in a short time."

"But the steamer," gasped Elfrida, "she may go without us."

"No, that's scarcely likely; she doesn't start till four to-morrow morning; still it's awkward, I allow, but there's no help for it. The best thing we can do now is to walk to an hotel; you can't stand here all night, and we'll go on board the first thing in the morning."

Elfrida looked at him as he spoke. She was almost breathless with alarm, and then as the full sense of her situation dawned on her, she burst into tears.

CHAPTER XII.

A NIGHT IN MALTA.

SHE couldn't help it, she cried all the way back to the hotel ; she was very thoughtless and very wild, but she was not at all what is styled in these days "larky." Elfrida was not one to treat a *contretemps* of this kind as a joke, and yet her grief was more on account of what Grace would think, or papa and mamma would say, than from fear of how the world might interpret her conduct. She was very innocent and unsophisticated, and though I do not mean to intimate, that at eighteen, she was still unaware that it is not the custom for young ladies and gentlemen, who are not relations to one another, to cut board ship and spend the night on shore together, she was still so fresh, so newly come from the Misses Plimpton, at Blackheath, that the injury that might accrue to herself from such an escapade, did not appear so great in her eyes as it would have done in those of an older woman. William Treherne, on the other hand, a

man of six-and-twenty, who had been knocking about the world for the last ten years, saw at a glance what a scrape he had led this girl into. With all his manœuvring for a little *tête-à-tête*, he had never intended to go so far as this, and he walked by her side to the hotel very silently, excepting now and then when he begged her not to cry.

"Pray, don't, Elfrida," he said, "you make me so unhappy; it can't be helped, you know, it's no one's fault."

"Oh, yes, it is," she answered, "it's mine. I ought to have followed them to the steamer directly; but I had no idea it was going to blow so hard."

"No; how could you have had, or any one? It's very unfortunate, but I dare say it will only be the inconvenience of a few hours in the hotel. Stupid work, but we must try and amuse one another."

He spoke confidently, to reassure his companion, but he knew very well that the storm was not likely to be over so soon, or that it could possibly leave the sea even then, calm enough for an open boat to venture out in; and though he might have risked it for himself, he loved this girl already, in his own selfish way, and would not have exposed her to any danger. When they reached the hotel, and had

secured a private sitting-room, Elfrida seated herself by the window which looked out upon the sea, now lashed into a fury by the fast-increasing gale, and steadfastly refused refreshment, or comfort of any kind.

"You'll take some tea, Elfrida, won't you?" said Treherne, when that meal appeared. "I would have ordered dinner if I had thought it would have been of any use; it won't make matters better, to fret like this, you know."

"Oh, I'd rather not, thank you, Mr. Treherne. I couldn't eat anything, I'm not at all hungry;" and her tears fell fast again upon the puppy she still carried in her arms.

She did not notice that he called her by her Christian name, or, if so, she did not mind it. She was so unhappy, it was a comfort to hear any one speak to her in an assuring voice. It would have been harder to have been called Miss Salisbury just then, and to have been reminded of the distance between them. As she sat in the window, watching the tossing waves, which seemed to her excited imagination to throw themselves higher and higher every moment, her thoughts dwelt most sadly upon what might be in store for her, when her father and mother in India came to hear that she had stayed a

whole night on shore at Malta, alone with Mr. Treherne. Grace might not tell of her, but Mrs. Canning, who was so intimate with her parents, would be sure to mention it. Not, perhaps, if she was asked not; but Elfrida scorned to beg any one to conceal a fault of her own. She would not have been so alarmed, perhaps, if she had known her father and mother; but she had been separated from them since she was four years old, and had no remembrance of them whatever. There were only three of them altogether. Mary and Grace were Indian children, but Elfrida had been born in England, and left there with her sister, for those many long years. Long years, but not weary ones, for she had youth, and health, and spirits; and Grace and she had been all in all to each other, since Mary had gone out to join her parents in Madras. Mary had gone out by herself four years before. Elfrida wondered if she had stopped a whole night on shore at Malta, or some other place, and never told anybody anything about it. It was the letters they had received from their parents, previous to their starting, which so alarmed her; they were so full of injunctions not to do this or the other, and not to form any intimate friendships, especially with gentlemen, and to be sure and always stick close to Mrs. Canning wherever they went, and

obey all she said. These parents, who had been separated from their children for so long, forgot that these girls had sprung up into young women, since they saw them last, and wrote to them often still, as if they were yet ten years old. Perhaps this strain of command kept up their fear of their unknown father and mother, more than anything else had tended to do. Presently, Elfrida looked again at the sea.

"Oh, Mr. Treherne," she exclaimed, "couldn't we go now? I'm sure the sea is lower than it was, and the sky is lighter. Look at it."

"It does seem brighter, but it is only a break in the storm. We must wait a little longer, Elfrida. Are you very tired?"

"Not very—only of waiting. My head aches, too: I suppose it was the sun."

"It's nearly ten o'clock," he said, looking at his watch; "I have ordered them to prepare a bedroom for you. Don't you think you had better go to bed for a few hours, Elfrida? You shall be called directly there is a chance of our getting away."

"I couldn't," she answered, wearily; "even if I wished it, I've nothing to go to bed in."

William Treherne had not thought of this difficulty, and he had no remedy to propose for it.

"But will you not lie down for a little while? You will be so knocked up by the morning, if you sit here all the time."

"It would be of no use, Mr. Treherne, I should feel so fidgety; I should get off the bed every minute to look at the sea. Do go, and find out how soon we shall be able to go on board now, please."

He was gone nearly an hour this time, but when he returned he had better news.

"Our luck has turned, Elfrida," he said: "the boatmen say if the sea continues going down, as it is doing now, they will take us on board in another couple of hours; so you see it will be all right, after all. Now will you cheer up, and look less melancholy?" he added, as he came and took a seat beside her. "Why, think how much worse it might have been. Suppose the storm had lasted all night, and the steamer had gone off without us: what then?"

"I'm sure I don't know what we should have done then," said Elfrida, laughing in spite of herself. "I should have had to go back again to Miss Plimpton, I'm afraid."

"Unless you had chosen the alternative of marrying me," said Treherne, as he gazed into the depths of her grey eyes.

But the grey eyes were lowered immediately.

"That's rather a far-fetched idea," was her only answer.

"Is it, Elfrida?" he asked, earnestly; "is it so very far-fetched, so very unlikely a thing to happen? Why shouldn't I as well ask you now, as wait till you get to Madras? You must have seen that I love and admire you; and I think, if I mistake not, you care for me too, Elfrida. Will you give me your promise now, and marry me when we get to Madras?"

But the look in her grey eyes startled him into forestalling, in his heart, the answer which came from her lips. It was a mixture of astonishment, fear, and pain.

"Oh, Mr. Treherne," she said, "I am so sorry! I had no idea you meant to ask me this. Oh, I wish you hadn't!"

"Do you mean to say you don't care for me, Elfrida? You have led me into a great mistake if you don't."

"I? Have I said anything, Mr. Treherne? I didn't mean it, if I have. I like you very much—very much indeed, for a friend; but to marry—I never liked any one in that way yet. I never thought about marrying you, or any one."

"You should have thought of it, then," he answered, moodily. "If you talk to other men in the

way you have to me, and seem as pleased with their attentions, you will lead them into the same error. It is not a pleasant error to fall into," he added, coldly.

Her distress, poor girl, was really great. Here was another crime laid to her charge.

"If I had thought," she began, and then, catching sight of the red coral snake coiled round her arm, she exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Treherne, you must take back this bracelet. I couldn't wear it now; I couldn't, indeed. I had no idea, when you offered it to me, that—that——"

"That my heart was hid in its scales," he answered, sarcastically. "Even so, Miss Salisbury; but," as she was attempting to unclasp the ornament, "you see it is not so easy to disengage at a moment's notice, and I suppose the heart must share the same fate. You should have thought of that before, Miss Salisbury."

"I see you think it is all my fault," she said; "but it is an unintentional one, I am sure. I wish I could undo it," she added, sadly.

"If you cannot undo it, you can remedy it, Elfrida," he answered, with eagerness. "Say you will let me love you still, and try to love me in return, and I will be satisfied with that. Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, no, not that!" she said, hastily; "anything but that. I have never been in love, but still I am sure the feeling I have for you is not real love, Mr. Treherne, though I like you very much—very much indeed."

"How can you tell, if you have never loved before?"

"I don't know," she answered, blushing; "but I have read of it, and I have thought of it, and I am sure this is not the same. I am so sorry," she added, deprecatingly.

"Pray don't concern yourself," he rejoined, almost curtly. "I dare say your indifference on the subject will teach me to forget it. At present, I'd rather drop it; it's not a pleasant thing to talk about." And he left her and walked out into the street again. He did care for her very much, as much as it was possible to do in a fortnight, and from a man of his temperament, for William Treherne was cold in general, and intensely selfish; and what he felt for Elfrida was only passion, it was not love. The proof of it was, that now that his affection was refused, he felt more anger against her than sorrow for himself. But he was also self-confident, and he did not despair, with a month's voyage still before them.

When he re-entered the hotel at two o'clock in the

morning, it was to announce that the sea was sufficiently gone down, and the boat was ready to take them again on board. He did not offer to cloak or shawl her this time; with the rousing of his pride, his politeness had evaporated. He merely said:

“Are you ready, Miss Salisbury? If so, you had better come at once;” and walked by her side in gloomy silence to where the boat lay waiting for them.

The night was very dark, no moon had risen after the storm, and the waves were still very high, though not dangerously so. But they were sufficient to frighten Elfrida, as she sat in the stern of the frail little pleasure-boat, her shawl tight around her, her puppy snuggled close to her breast. She grew paler and paler as the boat rocked violently, and occasionally a wave, larger than the rest, broke over it and her; and once a slight scream escaped her lips, as a rougher jerk than usual shook her in her seat. The Maltese boatmen addressed some words of reassurance in their own tongue to her, though she could not understand them. But William Treherne, what was he doing, that he let that young, frail girl grow sick with her anxious dread, whilst he never said a word to comfort or encourage her? What? Why, he had been rejected, and that was the extent of Mr. Tre-

herne's love for Elfrida Salisbury. She was hurt at his silence and want of notice, for she liked him, though she had never dreamt of liking him well enough to marry him. She was an innocent flirt, if you will, but she was no coquette; it had been very charming to her, as it would have been to you, under the same circumstances, coming straight from school, where she had had no admirers beyond herself and Grace, and no flattery except what her looking-glass gave her, to find suddenly that she was surrounded by a bevy of young men, who all evidently considered her the most attractive person in the vessel, and told her she was the most attractive they had ever seen. She liked the flattery, and the compliments; her young head was nearly turned by the homage, but still her heart was right, and Elfrida would have given up every pleasure, sooner than know she was drawing only one of her admirers on to care for her more than she did for him. And Mr. Treherne had been amongst the most forward to show her kindness and attention; and amidst all her fright at the violence of the waves, she kept on reproaching herself, as she sat in the little boat, holding on by the slender structure which supported the awning, that she should have been so foolish as to allow things to go so far with him, and so heartless as not to be able

to make him any return for his love. It did not enter her head to accuse him of presumption; she only blamed herself, and pitied him; even her friendship was better worth having than his so-called love. As they neared the "Nubian," already getting up her steam for starting punctually at the appointed hour, and the cry of "boat ahoy" was answered, and preparations made for their ascending the side of the vessel, Elfrida felt sadly ashamed and guilty, as she wondered who she should meet on deck. It was only the officer of the watch, who held a lantern to let her see the ladder steps, as she climbed up them to the gangway; but his jocose greeting of "Good morning, Miss Salisbury," brought the tears again into her eyes. She felt very humbled even before him; she wanted to say, "It was not intentional, we couldn't help it," but the words died on her lips, and she only walked past him rapidly to take her way down to her cabin. There she found Grace sitting up, of course, and anxiously waiting her return; but the words of reproach with which she had intended to greet her truant sister, were all smothered in the birth by Frida's burst of tears and self-reproach, and entreaties for forgiveness.

"Oh, my dear Frida," she said, "pray don't speak in that way to me! I know it was only thoughtless-

ness ; it will be all right, my love, to-morrow. Mrs. Canning will soon understand how it happened. Pray don't cry, dear Frida ! we will only take care it doesn't occur again. I am so thankful you are back safe, dear." .

And so Elfrida was easily persuaded by Grace that it would be all right to-morrow, and lay down to sleep soundly till daylight in her berth, with her expensive puppy still in her arms.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GREAT MISTAKE.

BUT Mr. William Treherne was not permitted to "turn in" quite so quietly as his partner in crime. The officer of the watch stopped him, as he essayed to pass him at the gangway.

"You are wanted below, Mr. Treherne. The captain gave orders that he wished to speak to you directly you returned on board."

"Why, what the deuce does he want with me?" demanded Treherne, with surprise.

"You had better go and ascertain for yourself," was the answer. "I am not in his confidence."

"Where is he?"

"In his cabin, I believe;" and so Mr. Treherne found his way down there. When he entered, the captain was sitting alone at his table, and looking very grave. Captain Nelson was a family man; he had grown-up sons and daughters of his own; and some people thought him unnecessarily strict in his

regulations on board the "Nubian." Perhaps he had had reasons to make him so ; but it certainly is true that he did not encourage great intimacy between the young ladies and gentlemen who honoured him occasionally with their company to India, or back. No dancing went on, on board the "Nubian." Very strict orders were given, and attended to, respecting the extinguishing of lights at certain hours ; and no *tête-à-têtes* were permitted by the light of the moon, or parties lounging about his paddle-boxes, making love indiscriminately. Young people always voted old Captain Nelson "dummy," and a "great nuisance," and a "bore ;" but mothers who had daughters going out to India without themselves, or even sons (for which need the most looking after ?) were always glad if they could secure berths for them in the "Nubian," that Captain Nelson might look after them, at all events part of the way. He was a hale, fine-looking man of fifty or sixty ; but his hair was very white from constant exposure, so he looked older than he was. As Treherne entered the cabin, Captain Nelson's small blue eyes were very stern and uncompromising, as he raised them and curtly begged him to take a chair.

"You wished to speak to me, I believe, Captain Nelson."

"I did, sir. Pray be seated, Mr. Treherne, I beg. I have an unpleasant duty before me, sir; a very unpleasant duty. There are certain regulations, Mr. Treherne, necessary to the order and well-being of a ship's company, which it is my duty to see enforced; but there are also private rules, relating to the passenger side of the vessel, which are almost as necessary, and quite as arbitrary."

"I don't see to what your remarks tend, sir."

"Don't you, Mr. Treherne? I will enlighten you, then. You have very flagrantly transgressed one of my private rules, sir, by escorting a young lady under my care (for I consider all young ladies in this steamer, without their natural guardians, as placed especially under my care) on shore, and not escorting her back again to the vessel in proper time. To stay away with an unmarried lady until three o'clock in the morning is an unheard-of thing, on the part of any one calling himself a gentleman. It is a thing I have never allowed to take place from my ship, sir; and a thing I never will allow to take place."

"And pray who constituted you guardian over your passengers, male and female, Captain Nelson?" demanded Treherne, in a sneering tone.

"It is nothing to you, sir, who constituted me their guardian. I consider myself as such, and on this

quarter-deck I am sole master. I have placed gentlemen in arrest before now, for less contempt than you have shown, towards the rules I have made for the comfort of the whole body of my passengers."

"You had better take care how you attempt to arrest me," said Treherne, angrily.

"Don't try to make me speak too plainly to you, Mr. Treherne," was the captain's reply. "I would rather settle this affair amicably, if possible. You must be aware you have been guilty of a breach of etiquette, not to call it by a harsher term, in detaining Miss Elfrida Salisbury, whether against her will, or with it, for nearly a whole night on shore. I suppose you cannot imagine that every one in the ship doesn't know of the circumstance. Are you aware how much you may compromise the young lady's character by such a proceeding?"

"I have *heard* of such things," said Treherne, carelessly. His nonchalant air roused the honest indignation of the old captain.

"Do you know, sir, that that girl is the daughter of one of my oldest friends, and one of the most influential men in Madras, Dr. Salisbury, a physician on the governor's staff? How do you think it will sound to him when he hears—as hear he will—the scandal and foolish babble repeated, which is certain to follow

this most thoughtless act of yours? Almost all your fellow passengers will meet you and Miss Salisbury at Madras. Do you think it likely they will permit a tale against her with so true a foundation as this to fall to the ground. I hope my friend, Dr. Salisbury, will call you to account for it, sir, if I cannot."

The wish was so evidently sincere, that William Treherne thought the affair began to assume an uglier aspect than he had anticipated for it, so he sneaked out of it by his usual method—deception.

"If you had permitted me, Captain Nelson, to speak before, instead of monopolising all the conversation, I should have told you, as I shall certainly tell Dr. Salisbury, when I see him, that I regret the mistake which led to this unfortunate accident (for the detention of Miss Salisbury and myself on shore was purely accidental) as much as he could do himself. As to my compromising the young lady's character, I should think the best means of stopping all such scandal, will be by becoming, as I shortly intend to do, her husband myself."

"You, Mr. Treherne? are you engaged to her?"

"Well, I don't know how I am to become her husband without that preliminary process, Captain Nelson. But, however, that is little to the purpose; I only wish to say after this, that if any one in

this vessel, or out of it, presumes to say a word against my intended wife, they may answer to me for it."

Captain Nelson looked more puzzled than pleased.

"If Miss Elfrida Salisbury has agreed to marry you, Mr. Treherne, of course that is not my business. She has her own parents, to whom you will soon be able to refer; but, in the meanwhile, until she is Mrs. Treherne, I must beg that her nights are spent in the 'Nubian' as long as she remains a passenger on board of her. I have nothing more to say," added the old captain, waving his hand; "Good morning, to you, Mr. Treherne," and with that waved him out of the cabin.

But he could not relish the news he had just heard, look at it as he would.

"Going to marry him," he soliloquized, "foolish girl, foolish girl! Salisbury won't like this, I'm sure. Well, daughters are a great responsibility, I must say; I'm glad mine are safe at home."

In the meanwhile, Mr. Treherne was pondering in his berth how he should manage to gain speech with Elfrida Salisbury before she again encountered her self-constituted guardian. I am afraid the captain would have arrested him in right earnest if he could have seen him a few hours later—first watch Grace

leave her cabin for the deck, and then walk boldly up to the door and knock. Elfrida was always later than her sister, even on mornings when she had risen from a good night's rest, so it was not to be wondered at, if she proved no exception to her general rule on this particular occasion. She had just knelt down to her simple prayers, and was classing all her wildness, and want of thought of the day before, amongst the most heinous of her sins, when Treherne's knock startled her; it was not loud, but it was determined. She did not rise at first, but when it was repeated she did so, and gently said "Come in." She was scarcely prepared as you may suppose, for a gentleman's entrance, and at first it gave her a shock, but she summoned up her courage and said:

"Oh! Mr. Treherne, you can't come in here. What *do* you want? Pray go away, some one may see you."

But her words did not seem to make any impression upon him. He only entered the cabin further, closed the door behind him, and locked it.

"Elfrida," he said, "don't make a fuss; I must come in, and I must speak to you; I have something very particular to say."

"What is it?" she asked trembling, her thoughts flying to all manner of ill.

"Nothing to be alarmed at; but look here! Hang those venetians," said he suddenly, looking at the fixed ones which formed the wall to the general saloon, "what do they put such things in bedrooms for, so that everybody may hear each word we say? Put your head out of the port, Elfrida, what I have to tell you is private."

She was frightened at his manner, so she obeyed his wish, and knelt upon the sofa-berth with him which ran beneath the large open port, whilst he turned his mouth towards the open sea, so that his conversation might be unheard by the chance inmates of the saloon.

"We've got into a scrape, Elfrida, about last night, I'm afraid," he commenced.

"Oh! how, Mr. Treherne?"

"Well, it seems they have all heard about it, and the captain's very particular, you know, and he says I've compromised your character, and that your father will be excessively angry when he comes to know of it, which he must do sooner or later.

Elfrida's eyes were staring at him in horror at his disclosure, but she did not speak.

"Captain Nelson thinks it looks so particularly bad, because we are only friends, you see; if I had had a right to take you about alone, it would not

have signified so much, but India is a dreadful place for scandal, and when an unfortunate story like this gets about, they don't suffer it to be forgotten."

Her eyes were full of tears now.

"Oh! Mr. Treherne, what shall I do?"

"There is but one way out of it, that I can see," he answered. "Captain Nelson said to me, 'If there had been anything between you, Treherne, it wouldn't have looked so bad; but all the passengers know of the fact now, and they have talked about it, and will talk, there is no doubt, as long as they remember the story to talk about. If you had been engaged to Miss Salisbury, now,' he said."

"What a silly old man he is," said Elfrida, through her tears.

"Why silly, Elfrida? I asked you yesterday to be my wife, and you said 'No'; but I have not taken that as a final answer. Think of it again. If we give out we are engaged to be married, it will stop all the talking at once; for if they dare to say anything, you have but to refer them to me, and I'll settle the question very soon. Grace need hear nothing about it, and if your parents do, why, no one thinks anything of engaged people being together now and then, you know."

"Oh! don't tell Grace," said Elfrida, in a flood of tears; "she is so kind, and so fond of me, it would make her miserable to know people talked about me and you. Oh! Mr. Treherne, I shall be so afraid to meet papa and mamma, I am sure they will be so angry."

"Not if I am with you, dearest," said Treherne. "Who will dare be angry with you when you are my wife? Dearest Frida, I am sure you care for me. Give me the promise you refused yesterday, and all this wretched business will be set straight. Grace need know nothing about it, nor your parents either."

He looked very handsome and affectionate as he said this, and the prospect of being "Mrs." Treherne, and wearing a wedding ring was very charming. Remember, too, that she liked the man; but still Frida hesitated a little.

"I don't want you to say you love me now," urged Treherne. "I only want you to try and love me. Do you think it will be so *very* difficult, Frida?"

Still she looked out on the sea, and did not speak a word.

"It is the only way to avoid your parents' anger, that I can see," he added.

This last thought acted like a spell to decide her,

but her eyes were full of a wavering fear as she turned them towards him.

"Yes, Mr. Treherne, I will marry you if you wish it; and you will be sure not to tell dear Grace that the captain was so angry, will you?"

"Quite sure; and you will love me, Frida, will you not?"

"I will try," she said quietly.

"But you do a little now, my beauty, don't you?"

"A little, perhaps," she answered, shyly.

"A little! a great deal, you mean, you darling. You are mine now, Elfrida, you know, my wife that is to be; we'll stay a whole week at Aden if we like, and no one shall say anything to us."

"Oh, no! we mustn't do it again," she said, without smiling.

"Yes, we may, anything we like, and when you are my wife, Frida, no one shall scold us then, shall they? and we'll be as happy as the day is long. But I must go now, as the coast seems clear," he said, as he unlocked the door and peeped out. "One kiss, Frida; come, don't be shy, my darling, that's a good girl; you've made me so happy," and he slipped out and left her.

If she had made him happy, I wonder if he had made her the same. As the sound of his cautious

footsteps died away, Elfrida, alone once more, knelt down to finish her interrupted prayers; but though thought was busy in her heart, and words were trembling on her lips, nothing came but tears.

CHAPTER XIV.

SCARCELY WORTH IT.

As William Treherne stepped from the cabin to the general saloon, he was sufficiently lucky to encounter no one, except a few stewards laying the table-cloths for breakfast. They stared, certainly, as they saw him make his exit from Miss Salisbury's cabin, and I dare say they talked of it amongst themselves afterwards ; but what stewards think and say, is of little consequence beyond their own class, and Treherne congratulated himself that he had got off so easily. As he walked to his own cabin, preparatory to making a decent and becoming reappearance therefrom, when breakfast should be ready, he felt very well satisfied with his night and morning's work.

"After all," he thought, "our being kept on shore was the best thing that could have happened ; for, if old Salisbury makes any objections to the marriage, I'll come down upon him with that ; not that he can make any reasonable objection, that I can see."

And so far, William Treherne's self-sufficiency was allowable. As outward circumstances went, no reasonable man would have objected to him as a son-in-law; for he came, as we know, of a good family, and was the eldest son of his father, who was a man of some property; but there was a large family of sons and daughters down at Milborough; and until old Mr. Treherne proved sufficiently obliging to vacate this world, and permit William to step into his shoes, that young gentleman had been forced to adopt a profession to support himself; and the one to which he now belonged, the Civil Service of Madras, had been his own choice. It was eight years now since he had entered its ranks, and it appeared to his friends, that he lived almost as much in England, as in India, as he was now returning from the third trip he had made home during that time. He had run the gauntlet of several steamers, full of beauties, therefore, before now; but, though he had made love to all of them, and disappointed not a few, he had never felt disposed to promote any one to the honour of being his wife, until he met with Elfrida Salisbury. I think what attracted him so much in her, was that very freshness and girlish nonsense which I have expatiated on. He had been allowed to go his own way from a boy, and to be far too

much by himself; consequently the various vices of this world were familiar things to him, at an age when other youths are generally still under pastors and masters; for William was not like his cousin George, of too refined a nature to take pleasure in low company and pursuits: he had always had an inclination that way, and where his inclinations pointed, he had seldom troubled himself to exercise self-denial; and, as is usual in such cases, he came to think, at last, that there were no other men and women in the world, but the men and women he had associated with; that all actions had a bad motive attached to them, because he seldom acted from a worthy motive himself; and that everybody was vicious, because he was full of vice. Nothing short of a school-girl's innocence, so open an innocence that there could be no disguise about the matter, would have attracted him; and so, from the first day he had talked with this girl, he had longed for her. She was to him what a sweet, fresh rose would be, to a man who had sat up writing by gaslight all night, till his brain reeled, or what a draught of cold water would be to one who had toiled through a hot sun until every drop of blood in his body seemed dried up—animal pleasures, both of them; and so was she to him: nothing in this world had ever proved any-

thing else to William Treherne yet. She was only to prove the last drop, which should make his cup of sensual gratification run over. He did not think once more of her plain denial, first given, nor of the hesitating acceptance, extorted from her afterwards. He did not consider that if the down is to be preserved on the butterfly's wing, the gay insect must come to you of its own accord; if it be secured against its will, ever so lightly, some of it will be lost; if it be grasped, how much will be left for you to admire? He was too selfish to think of anything like this. He wanted Elfrida Salisbury, and Elfrida Salisbury had said he should have her: that was quite sufficient for William Treherne. So, as he passed the brushes once more over his dark curls, and gave a finishing touch to his whiskers and moustaches, the face his tiny looking-glass reflected was flushed, happy, and confident, and he looked handsomer than usual, as he re-entered the saloon, where the passengers were already mostly seated at breakfast. People generally keep their own places at the tables, during meals, on board the P. & O. steamers; so, as he made his way up the room between the long rows of immovable seats, and amidst the gabble of a hundred-and-fifty tongues and the clatter of three hundred knives and forks, he

found his own nook, at the head of the table, near Captain Nelson and just opposite Elfrida Salisbury, kept vacant for him. As he exchanged greetings with the captain and Grace, who sat next to her sister, the one looked so unbending still, and the other so coolly polite, that Treherne was nettled, and determined to show the company at once, the terms on which he stood with the younger Miss Salisbury. As he lifted his leg over the mahogany back of the horse-hair benches (which is the only means of getting into your seat on board ship, if you are a late arrival, unless you turn all your fellow-passengers out, which is a politeness they would not be willing to accord to a gentleman), he looked towards his *fiancée*, and her eyes met his in a half-shy, half-conscious glance, as she felt the novelty of the new position she stood in towards him. She wore a simple muslin dress, of a small blue and white pattern; and a great deal of her sunny hair was hanging down her back this morning, in loose, wild curls, for she had not had time to dress it very carefully; but it made her look even more girlish than usual, and still more attractive in her lover's eyes. She had evidently been crying, but he didn't think anything of that: girls cried for everything. He hated Grace for looking grave, whether she knew of the engagement or not;

and so he determined to appropriate Elfrida at once, and give her sister something to look grave about. His salutation to Captain Nelson was exceedingly free and easy.

"Good morning, captain ; hope I see you well, sir. Squally night, wasn't it? By Jove, Frida, it was a close shave! We must look sharper another time. Good morning, Miss Salisbury ; I hope you didn't sit up for us."

And so saying, Mr. Treherne threw himself into his seat, and attacked curry and rice, and cold fowl.

Grace looked round at her sister in surprise, as she heard him mention her by name ; but Elfrida only kept her eyes upon her lap, and commenced fidgeting with the bunch of charms which hung to her watch-chain.

He noticed both actions, and delighted in them.

"Frida," he said, presently, looking up, and you may be sure half the table looked up as he spoke, "you have a headache, I am sure ; this place is insufferably hot. Here, steward, open the ports behind Miss Salisbury. Would you like to change places with me ? It's cooler this side."

"Oh, no!" she said, blushing at his address, "I'm all right, thank you, Mr. Treherne ; I'd rather not move. My head only aches a little."

"I can't have you with those headaches," he added, presently; "you should take something for them. How's the puppy, Frida?"

What *was* he doing? Talking of the puppy that was to be smuggled in the cabin, all the way to Alexandria, if not Madras? A sense of humour struck Frida at the mistake. She looked across the table, and laid her finger on her lips, whilst a smile of intelligent meaning lit up the grey eyes till they flashed all archness. It died away almost immediately, but it answered his purpose admirably.

"All right," he answered; "I forgot that was between you and me." But he leant right across the table as he spoke. Grace looked vexed, she thought Frida was going too far. She saw no remains of the penitence which had possessed her a few hours before. She condemned her as insincere and trifling. But as she was about to leave her when breakfast was ended, and go on deck by herself, Frida intercepted her retreat.

"Come to our cabin, Grace," she said, nervously. "I have something particular to tell you." Even as they stood there, William Treherne's hand was laid on her shoulder, and he said, but so low that only she and Grace could hear him:

"Frida, darling, won't you come on deck while I smoke?"

"Not now; presently," she answered; "I want to speak to my sister."

Treherne looked round at the sister, with a saucy defiance in his eyes.

"Well, make haste, my own," he said, with a stress upon the words, "for I can't spare you for long."

But as the sisters entered the little cabin, Grace was breathless with astonishment and indignation.

"Frida," she cried, "what right has that man to speak to you and look at you in that way? What does he mean by it?"

"Grace," said Frida, and her voice began to tremble, "that is just what I want to speak to you about. I am engaged to him."

She turned away her head from her sister as she spoke, and looked out of the port.

"Engaged, Frida! Good Heavens! what do you mean? Engaged to marry him?"

"Yes, of course; what other engagement could it be? He asked me twice, Grace; once yesterday, and again this morning, only I could not make up my mind till this morning. He is very fond of me, Grace, and I don't think papa will mind it; do you?"

"Oh, Frida!" was all her sister could say.

"But, Grace, why do you look so grave about it? There is nothing so extraordinary in being engaged, is there? Everybody is, sooner or later."

"But you have known him such a little while, Frida."

"Oh, I know all about him that I want to know; and he is very kind. I am sure nothing could be kinder than he has been to both of us, since we came on board ship. I think it very ungrateful of you, Grace, to try and set me against him in this way."

"I set you against him, Frida!" said Grace; "oh, no! dear, don't say that. I dare say he is everything that is good, if you had had time to find it out. Do you care for him *very much*, Frida?"

But Frida's eyes were gazing out over the water, and she made no answer to her sister's question.

"Frida, dear, do you love him?"

"Well, Grace, I haven't known him, as you say, very long yet, but I like him very much, and I dare say I shall be very fond of him when we are married. Of course, women always care for their husbands. I'm sure he's very kind, and I think he's awfully handsome; don't you, Grace? I'll tell you one thing I don't like, and that is his name. I can't bear the name of William, and Willy sounds so

babyish, and Bill—oh! if anybody called him Bill, I think I'd knock their heads off. I suppose I shall have to call him William. I do wish he had another name, Grace."

Grace could not help smiling at her childishness, though the smile was a sad one.

"You baby," she said, "what does a name signify? Besides, you could scarcely find a prettier one than Treherne."

"Yes, I like Treherne—Elfrida Treherne—it sounds well, doesn't it? I shall be a married lady before you, Grace, and I shall have to chaperon you to the balls at Madras."

"I cannot believe yet that it will ever come to pass," answered Grace; "it seems like a dream to think you have engaged yourself to be married, Frida."

"It does seem strange to me, too," said Elfrida, "but it must have come some day, Grace; so it can't make much difference in the end, can it?" and she turned her eyes to meet her sister's. But what she saw there, made her clasp her arms about Grace's neck, and have what is technically termed "a good cry." Yet why I should put it in the singular I know not, since they cried together.

"Oh! Grace, my darling," said Elfrida, "whatever

happens to me, I will never go far away from you. I must have you near me, always."

"Hush, dearest," said her sister; "when you marry, you must do what your husband wishes; but I hope we may never be separated for long together. Now dry your eyes, my dearest love, Mr. Treherne would think you are miserable instead of happy, if he were to see you."

"But Grace," urged Frida, still clinging to her, "you will always love me whatever happens, won't you, or whatever people say."

"What makes you ask such a question, my Frida?" said Grace, shocked at the idea of such a probability; "always, and for ever, dearest, so help me God. When have I ever given you reason to think otherwise?"

"Oh, Grace, I love you so."

She could express love when she felt it, and she overflowed with it here. This woman's heart loved before it had done with roving, with an intensity that nearly withered its springs of life, but I doubt if it ever experienced a feeling, at the same time so pure, so ardent, and so steadfast, as that which now actuated its every impulse, as it beat against that of her sister's. They had never been separated; from little children they had fed and slept and learnt

together, and they were all the more devoted because they had had no other or nearer claimants on their affection. As I have told you before, the titles of father and mother were to them only names; to Elfrida, Grace had supplied all that circumstances had deprived her of, in them. She looked up to her sister, as if the difference in their ages was far greater than it was; and, indeed, the difference in their dispositions made it appear so; whilst to Grace, Elfrida was something to be petted and given in to, and fondly loved, and guarded from all harm. To find that her young sister had taken so serious a step on her own responsibility, seemed suddenly to place her altogether in a different light in Grace's eyes. She could not realise it yet. She wanted to be alone to think it over. She dreaded she knew not what; her head was in a whirl. As she gently disengaged Elfrida's arms from about her neck, and reminded her of her promise to join her lover, she pleaded several excuses for not accompanying her at once. She had so much to do in the cabin. So Elfrida washed her swollen eyes, smoothed her bright hair, and prepared to join William Treherne on deck. Even then she returned more than once, to throw her arms again about Grace's neck and kiss her, and give her many assurances of her love. So that Grace had to satisfy her-

self that Elfrida was really up the companion stairs before she felt that she might do as she chose. And what she chose to do was to cry—cry, as if her heart was breaking. Not because Frida was going to be married, but because she did not, and she felt she never should, like the man she had accepted for her husband. Grace thought of the many acts of inconsideration and impoliteness, she had witnessed on William Treherne's part since their acquaintanceship. She knew he admired her sister very much, but, even in his admiration for her, he never consulted her comfort so much as his own. She thought of his sinister looks, of his love of exaggeration, his intense selfishness, his open disregard of religion, till she wondered how Elfrida could see anything in him to like above others. Then her thoughts flew to wondering what her father and mother would say to such a piece of news. They must know it, perhaps the very first day. Grace thought she would scarcely like to have been the culprit on such an occasion; then how much harder would it be for Elfrida—dear, little Elfrida—to stand the brunt of their displeasure alone? From that moment she felt she must be on her sister's side, whatever it was. Frida must have her support, to help her to bear whatever her thoughtlessness or wilfulness might bring upon herself. If

it was inevitable, why Grace could do no harm in backing up her sister, and her darling should not have all of them, father, mother, and sister, setting their faces against her wishes. How long she sat and thought, she did not afterwards know, but she was interrupted by Frida's knock at the cabin-door (for Grace had locked it when she found herself alone), and Frida's voice imploring immediate entrance, and her voice sounded very much as if she was crying.

"Oh, Grace, darling, pray open the door at once; I want to show you something. Oh, do open the door!"

Grace unlocked the door in trepidation, thinking some new calamity had come upon them; and there stood Elfrida indeed, her face bathed in tears, with the skirt of her pretty muslin dress, all crumpled up in her arms, and, in the midst of it, the form of the little white Maltese puppy, looking very much as if he intended saying good-bye to this world.

"Oh, Grace! my little puppy is so sick; and Mr. Treherne thinks it is dying."

Mr. Treherne had spoken the truth for once. The poor little dog had been taken away a great deal too soon from its mother, and after having been exposed to the hot sun of Malta for the whole of the day be-

fore, had been stuffed by Elfrida with various kinds of dainties, every half-hour since she had possessed it ; and between the loss of its natural and the acquisition of its unnatural food, it had come to the determination to cut food altogether. So there it lay, in the folds of her muslin dress, quite unconscious of the dignity of its position, or of the kind, tearful eyes which were watching its exit from the world, with so much anxiety.

" Oh, Grace ! do you think it will die ? " Elfrida asked again of her sister.

" Indeed, Frida, dear, I'm afraid it will ; it looks very like it ; " which it certainly did, for at that moment the unfortunate puppy stretched itself out with a shiver and a jerk, and then lay still. " It is dead, Frida, " Grace continued, as she took up the little body, and examined it.

" Oh no, Grace ! it isn't ; it only feels weak, poor little thing. Shall I get a spoon and some milk, and try to put it down its throat ? "

" You couldn't, my child ; " said her sister, almost laughing at her earnestness ; " it really is dead. You must give up your puppy, Frida, dear. "

" Oh, Grace ! I am so sorry, I wanted it so much. I took so much trouble to feed it ; and I have had it almost all the time in my arms. I never thought it

would die directly. *I am so vexed.*" And Frida was ready to cry again.

"It was scarcely worth it, Frida, dear, was it?" asked Grace, presently.

"Worth what?" she said, looking up from the dead puppy.

Ah! worth what? The answer struck upon both their hearts at the same time; though they neither of them spoke a word. Their eyes met and dropped simultaneously. They were each ashamed the other should have read her thoughts. Then Frida broke the silence by jumping up, and saying, quickly:

"It's no good bothering about it, Grace; if it's gone, it's gone. What must I do with the poor little thing, now?"

"I think you had better throw it out of the port, Frida, dear: and the sooner you do it the sooner you will forget all about it."

Elfrida had always been very childish about animals. She would cry over the sorrows of a dog or a horse, as if they had been human creatures; and Grace expected to see her make quite a sentimental fuss, before she parted with the body of the hapless little Maltese puppy. She would not have been surprised to see her wrap it carefully in a pocket-handkerchief, or pack it away in some pretty little box,

before she committed it to the deep. But something had happened to Elfrida, that morning, which had made her more than a schoolgirl; which would go far, perhaps, in time, to make her less than a woman.

She had made her first mistake in life, and she had that moment received from her sister's careless words her first conviction that, for what she had sold herself—love of admiration and love of pleasure—her bargain was scarcely worth. Her temper seemed to change instantaneously. Before the tears were dried in her eyes, she began to laugh with a kind of feverish excitement. She leapt upon the sofa which lay beneath the open port, and without another look at the dead puppy, without one regretful smoothing of its white hair, without one appeal to it, to say why it had chosen to die, Elfrida hurled the body far over the water, and laughed as she did so.

“So much for Maltese puppies, Grace; it will be a long time before I want another. As you say, it's not been worth the trouble. I wish I had never seen it.” And as she spoke, she jumped on to the floor again, without waiting to watch the sea close over what she had given it.

“Poor little thing,” said Grace, compassionately.

“Why poor little thing? I'm very glad it's gone,”

said Elfrida, braving out her annoyance. "I dare say it would have grown up a regular mongrel, as big as a shepherd's dog, with a long nose and little eyes. Those men always cheat. It's stupid here, Grace. I shall go back to William. Will you come?"

"Do you want me?" said Grace. "It is hot on deck, and I have a headache. I was going to read in the saloon."

"Never mind, then," said Elfrida, still in the same careless tone. "I'll do without you till it's cooler; but I must go, for the air of these cabins stifles me. Kiss me, Grace, before I go."

Grace thought Elfrida wanted a great deal of kissing that morning, and it was a very unusual demand on her part; but it never came too often for her sister. So she kissed her again, and the sisters left their cabin together, and as Grace made her way with her book in her hand, up to the sofas at the end of the general saloon, Elfrida flew up the companion stairs to the deck.

But Grace was not destined to be left alone, even now. When she came to the sofas, she found one of them occupied by Douglas Cameron; one of the young men who had been of their party the day before. He was lying down and reading, or trying

to do so ; but he jumped up directly Grace approached him.

"Are you going to lie down, Miss Salisbury?" he said ; "take my place."

"No, thank you, Mr. Cameron," she answered ; "why should I do that, when there is another sofa close at hand? Don't you feel the heat very much to-day?"

"Yes, I do rather," he said ; "because I've a headache."

"Do lie down again, then, Mr. Cameron ;" said Grace, as she ensconced herself on one of the couches, with her book ; "or I shall be sorry I came here."

"No, I would rather not," he said. "I think lying down makes it worse. I shall sit and talk to you. What is your book, Miss Salisbury?"

"A very charming one," she answered. "I am so interested in it, 'Emilia Wyndham.'"

"Why! have you never read that before?" he asked with surprise.

"No, never. Mrs. Canning lent it me ; but, then you know, Mr. Cameron, I have always been at school, till now ; and we were not allowed to read novels there."

"Then you've got a glorious treat before you, Miss

Salisbury. I like nothing better than a good novel. I do so despise the narrow-mindedness of those who condemn all works of fiction as 'mental drams,' because a few inferior ones present us pictures of insipid folly, without moral or meaning in them. I think a novel may be productive of as much good as many a more seriously written book. Don't you think so, Miss Salisbury?"

"I can scarcely pretend to be a judge, yet," she answered; "but as far as I have read of this one, for instance, what author could uphold virtue more, or deprecate the slightest variance from what is right, with greater severity? I think she is almost too particular," said Grace, blushing. "I am afraid there are few real women who would have done their duty to old Mr. Danby, as Emilia Wyndham did; and so disagreeable as he was, too."

"Yes, he wasn't much of a bargain, was he? I have heard novels condemned because there is always something about love in them. Why, how could they be natural without love? It's our nature, it rules the world."

"Yes," said Grace, shortly; though she did not know much about it herself.

The young man remained silent for some time, and then, as if he were making a great effort, he said:

"Miss Salisbury, you are so good and kind, I want to speak to you about something."

"What is it, Mr. Cameron? are you not well?" For, indeed, he did not seem so. He had been a ruddy-looking young Scotsman when he came on board the "Nubian," but he had grown much paler the last few days; and Grace thought it was the heat that had affected him.

"It's not that," he answered hurriedly; "and I dare say you will think me very foolish, Miss Salisbury, for speaking so soon, or, indeed, for speaking to you at all; but it is what happened yesterday that makes me do so. It is about your sister——" he paused, as if he thought she must guess the sequel; but she did not.

"What about Frida, Mr. Cameron?"

He began to play nervously with the tassels of the sofa-cushions, plaiting and unplaiting the silken fringe of which they were composed.

"I want you to tell her, Miss Salisbury, what I am such a fool as to want courage to tell her myself, that I love her. I can't help it. I cared for her the first day I saw her. Who could see her, and help doing so? It seems almost absurd to speak so soon; but there are others in the field," he said, closing his lips, "and, in some cases, it is *not* the staying horse who wins."

Grace had risen into a sitting posture as he spoke, and her whole face was full of pity and compassion for him as he turned his eyes towards it.

"Miss Salisbury, you are going to tell me there is no chance for me," he said, impetuously.

"Not, no chance for *you*, Mr. Cameron, but no chance for any one. Oh! I am so sorry this should have happened; and so would she be, if she knew it. Haven't you heard the news?"

"No; what?" he almost gasped.

"I thought all the ship knew it by this time," she answered, "that my sister is engaged to Mr. Treherne."

"Engaged to Treherne? going to marry Treherne?"

"Yes, I suppose so, if my father makes no objection to it."

"He will never allow it. I am sure he will never allow it."

Douglas Cameron had risen as he spoke, and was standing opposite to the sofa on which she sat. His face was very pale, and his voice was raised angrily. Grace thought he began to take too much upon himself.

"I don't see what reason you have for making so sure of it, Mr. Cameron," she said, rather more coldly than before.

Her tone recalled him.

"Oh! forgive me, Miss Salisbury," he pleaded, "I was forgetting myself; but if you love her, try and dissuade her from marrying Treherne. I don't suppose there would be any chance for myself then. I do not speak interestedly; but she will be wretched if she marries him."

"Have you known him before?" asked Grace, in surprise.

"Known him; of course I have. I've been in the same station with him. He is known throughout the length and breadth of India to have no more heart than a stone."

"He has plenty of heart for Elfrida," said Grace, warmly.

"For her beauty; yes!"

"Mr. Cameron, I think you are going too far. I would rather not discuss my sister's future husband with you. She is engaged to him; that is quite sufficient."

"Don't quarrel with me, Miss Salisbury. The news has made me very wretched."

She saw that, by the expression of his face, and she felt very much for him. She had been a little angry with his expressing himself so strongly against William Treherne; all the more so perhaps because his

dislike confirmed her own fears ; but that passed away when she saw the sad look his countenance assumed. Presently he arose and took up his book.

"I won't bother you on the subject any more, Miss Salisbury. Say you forgive me."

She held out her hand to him, and, as she felt his, she could not resist giving it a little pressure.

"God bless you," was all his answer, as he left her to her own meditations.

CHAPTER XV.

DEATH IN MILBOROUGH.

THE eight o'clock mess dinner was over in Milborough Barracks, and the billiard-room of the 120th Lancers was brilliantly lighted up. The gas flared from numerous sconces placed along the walls, revealing an apartment fitted up with unusual luxury (even for those Sybarites of England, the officers of her Majesty's army). The sides of the apartment, which were painted in panels of gold and white, had niches at intervals along their course, in each of which stood the statue of a female figure, whilst beneath them were placed couches of the most easy form and make, raised upon a platform running round the room, from which the spectators of the game might watch every stroke of the cues.

It was towards the close of the month of October, about a fortnight after William Treherne's departure for India, that his cousin George was lounging in a nonchalant manner upon one of the couches I have

described, with his cigar between his lips, watching the progress of a noisy game amongst his brother officers. At least I suppose if he had been asked, he would have said he was watching them; but his thoughts were meanwhile wandering in various places. He was a strange mixture, George Treherne; no one of his friends (and no man had ever had more) had fathomed him yet; and yet everyone thought they knew him almost as well as they did themselves. If you had asked his intimates, who associated with him every day, and knew all the circumstances of his life, and were constantly exchanging ideas with him, what kind of a man Captain Treherne was, they would have answered with one accord that he was the jolliest fellow in the world, always happy, and light-hearted, and careless, ready to enter into any kind of fun; not a very deep thinker perhaps, and no book-worm. With respect to women? well, he was rather crotchety on that point. Most people thought he had had a set-down earlier in life. He certainly fought shy of them now. Good-looking? oh, yes, he was well enough—suppose most women would call him handsome; rather too delicate-looking for a man's idea of that sort of thing. This would have been most men's description of George Treherne, morally and physically; and like all who try to read

another's heart, they would have been wrong, at least in several points of their statement. In the first place, my hero was not always happy, and light-hearted, and careless; he had occasionally hours of great depression, as all will have, who have found this life not answer their expectations; but who have not yet given up the false idea that there is such a thing as happiness in it, and that if they only search long enough, they shall find it. In the second place, he was a deep thinker, and a large thinker, although his thoughts had never yet found a satisfactory channel to rest themselves in. They roved everywhere consequently, wondering at many things, the fact of which they ought to have accepted, without vain questions as to its wherefore, questions which being unanswerable, only made him sceptical and unbelieving. His mind wanted something tangible to rest upon, and to believe; at present it was like a turbid stream. The clear waters of his understanding had been muddied and made impure by the doubts and arguments which he had no one to clear up for him, and render plain for ever by the unquestionable light of truth. And thirdly, George had never had a set-down yet, from a woman. It had been their flattery, their open admiration of so poor a thing as his outward appearance, that had made him, for the

folly of a few, condemn the whole sex in his heart. He had never even been in love. He was used to laugh at the exaggerated terms, as he called them, in which others had occasionally expressed their feelings to him, whilst under the spell. He had simply never felt it. He believed he never should feel it. He was wrong. The woman lived who should make his barren, unused heart confess it had not known what life was until it met her—that should make love spring from it, like a seed from a rich soil, till the plant grew, and spread its tendrils about every nerve of his being, not to be uprooted thence but with death. He certainly had no thought of this, as he sat there that evening. He might have been watching the billiard balls, but his blue eyes were only half unclosed, as his friend Charles Digby took a seat by his side, and that half was directed towards the ceiling, instead of the table.

“Holloa! Treherne, are you asleep?” said Digby’s genial voice, as he planted himself on the sofa.

This other was not a handsome man, but he was very nice looking. Indeed that term, although it is said to be essentially “a woman’s,” expresses, better than any other could do, what his appearance was. His greyish-blue eyes were nice; his fair hair was nice; he was nice all over, a specimen of a good-

hearted, frank, Saxon gentleman, and he was all that he looked.

"If I had been," answered Treherne, "I shouldn't have thanked you for waking me, for I'm abominably tired;" and he lounged back still further as he spoke.

"Did you have a good run?"

"Pretty well; we ran one cub to Farley Wood, and waited about there an hour, but we couldn't unearth it again. The other took to the open country at once, and gave us a run of two hours, straight to Horsfield. The 'Prince,' seemed to feel the last two fields very much, and lost me considerable ground; I don't expect I shall be able to hunt that horse any more this season, Digby; he's losing weight considerably."

"Is he, really? I'll tell you what it is, Treherne, you are getting too much for him. You must have gained a couple of stone since last season. You're such a lazy beggar!"

"That's the first time I heard that," rejoined George, laughing; "however, it doesn't much signify, I shall soon run it down again, now that I have to work for my living. Perhaps Canada will do it."

"Has your application gone in?"

"Yes, yesterday. I hope they will not keep me long waiting. I hate this place! I am impatient to get out of it. I was telling Agnes the other day

there was only one thing I should have liked to have seen first, and that is, her wedding."

Digby's bright face overclouded at the allusion.

"I wish you could have done so. What is to be done about this affair, George? All my efforts at persuasion seem to make the probabilities of its termination more distant. My mother is ready enough to do her part in the business, if Mrs. Treherne would only meet her half-way. It is rather hard our happiness should be cut up in this manner, because a couple of women won't shake hands and be friends. Could not you do anything for me with your mother?"

"I tell Agnes she is a fool, not to take you without any one's leave—she is of age."

"She could hardly do that," answered Digby, quickly, "without compromising her sense of duty. Treherne, I don't expect you to understand my feelings on the subject, but I cannot tell you how much fonder her submission in this matter (aggravating though it is to myself), makes me of her. I know it is not from indifference; it is her sense of duty, that makes her determined to wait for her mother's cordial leave before she marries me."

"Rather overstretched, don't you think so?" said Treherne, carelessly.

"No, not a bit," returned his companion, warmly ; "though I fret and chafe under the delay, myself, I am sure it will all come right in the end. Agnes will not keep me waiting for ever, I know ; and if it comes to that, I know Lady Digby would rather be the one to make the apology herself (though what for, Heaven knows) sooner than see me unhappy. She would do it now, only my father won't hear of it."

"Quite right of him, too," answered George ; "my mother's temper wants bringing down. I'll see what I can do for you, Digby, before I leave England ; though I doubt whether putting in my oar will be of any use, except bringing down a storm on my own head. I don't think it would be a favourable opportunity just now, though, for she's very much put out about this estate business. One would think I had voluntarily resigned it, or been the author of Mademoiselle du Broissart's being, to hear the reproaches I get for her appearance. Anyhow, whether I'm in England or Canada, whenever you choose to have my sister, Digby, you have my free consent to take her ; and as I am her only brother, I should think that ought to go for something."

"It goes for almost everything, my dear fellow," replied Digby, as he shook his friend's hand. "I

do not despair of getting as cordial a consent, some day, from your mother herself. What's that?" he asked, as one of the mess-servants approached with a waiter in his hand, and on the waiter a small, pink, three-cornered note.

"For Captain Treherne, sir," was the man's reply.

George Treherne raised himself to take the tiny missive some one had been kind enough to send him. Its appearance looked suspicious, and some of the men who were nearest to him laughed, "Hol-loa, Treherne," they said, "caught at last!"

Any other young fellow would have laughed with them, and, perhaps, have rather liked the suspicion attached to his correspondence, but, as we have seen before, this man was particularly sensitive upon this score. He had recognized the scratchy handwriting of his cousin Dora, who often took advantage of some trivial news, or request, to send him little notes that she might extract an answer from him, and it was not calculated to make him better pleased at having been exposed to raillery—(a species of torment which, I am afraid, he bore but badly) for her sake—so he gave quite a growl, as he took the pink cocked-hat from the waiter, and thrust it, without a glance at its contents, into his pocket. The growl warned his companions not to pursue

their innocent jesting, for, they knew of old, Treherne was not a man to be joked with against his will with impunity; and they liked him too well to really annoy him. So the subject of the note was dropped. But it was getting very late, and the billiard-room was thinning fast, for they had to march up to the downs and back, the next morning, before breakfast, whatever their fatigue; for they had a martinet of a colonel, and a tyrant of a second in command, who never made the slightest allowance for cub-hunting—or balls.

When Digby rose, and wished the room good-night, George, who had been asleep, on and off, for the last hour, thought he might as well be in his bed, as on the sofa, and followed his friend's example. As he stood before his looking-glass, emptying his pockets on to the dressing-table, the three-cornered pink note reappeared, in company with a cigar-case, and box of vesuvians, a handful of loose coin, and an elaborately-scented pocket-handkerchief; elaborately, but not a bit too much, because the scent was of the best. As he took it up, preparatory to opening it, he caught a sight of his own face in the glass. With his dark hair rumpled from its contact with the sofa-cushions, his eyes half-closed from want of sleep, his cheeks flushed from the same cause; perhaps he

never looked handsomer than he did at this moment. I do not know if the thought also struck himself, but he swung the glass with an impatient jerk backwards, and something very like an oath slipped from his lips as he prepared to read the contents of his unwelcome epistle. But he had not read far before his countenance quite changed, and the look of fretful annoyance gave place to one of concern. He exclaimed once or twice to himself, read the note a second time, and then rang the bell for his personal attendant. He had commenced undressing before he emptied his pockets, but now he quickly put on his coat and waistcoat again, and proceeded to brush his disordered hair into something like neatness. When the man answered the summons, he asked him if he could get him a cab from the railway-station.

"I am afraid it's too late, sir—it's past two, and they leave the station after the 12·20 train. Shall I get one from the hotel, sir?"

"No! I could not wait for that. I must walk it. Give me my great-coat, Mills, the morning is cold——"

"Anything wrong, sir?" asked the man respectfully, as he stood by with the coat over his arm.

"Yes, at the Lawn, Mills. My uncle is taken suddenly worse—supposed to be dying——"

"Very sorry, I am sure, sir. Can I do anything?"

"Nothing, Mills. You needn't sit up for me—where's my stick? What's the patrol? Seringapatam? Thanks; good-night?"

It was a peculiarity with George Treherne, that all servants loved him—not the maids only, though he had a good many adorers amongst that humble class. The secret of it was, that he always treated them with as much politeness as if they were his equals, and was never above thanking them for the offices they performed for him. To those beneath him, he was uniformly kind, and there was not a man of his company that would not have risked his life at any time to have done a benefit for Captain Treherne.

As he walked along in the cold, grey October morning, in the direction of his uncle's house, all those little petty feelings which we have seen him display, of annoyance and temper, melted away beneath the exercise of a really kind act. The thought of his own little worries never once crossed his mind as he hurried on his way to the Lawn—as Mr. William Treherne's residence was called. It was situated about half a mile out of Milborough, and was a pretty enough place, being a large and well built modern

house, standing in its own grounds, which were extensive and always beautifully kept. The William Trehernes had never been a family very congenial to George's taste. William, the eldest son, was only home occasionally, as we have seen, so that the three next children, all daughters, were the only ones that could be called grown up. Dora, the eldest of the three, was of the same age as Agnes Treherne—and that was, at the time I am writing of, twenty-four. Two younger sons, at college together, and a nursery of four or five little ones, completed the quiverfull, of the emptiness of which the proprietor could scarcely have complained. They were a disorderly, unmanageable set, over whom their father seemed not to care to exercise any control, and their mother incapable of doing so. The children ruled the house, therefore it was always ruled in eleven different ways. I believe the father had often thought that things should be altered some day—when the girls were married, and the boys embarked in their various professions; but the day was never to come for him now. He had been out of health for some months past, and the summons had arrived for him at last, which must arrive for us all, sooner or later. His young cousin George had always been a favourite with Mr. William Treherne, as indeed, he was

with most people ; but I cannot say that he returned the liking : he had held very aloof from the Lawn, and especially of late, when he had refused several invitations to parties there, both dinner and evening, in succession, for Mr. Treherne's health had not been so bad as to put a stop to the "Lawn's" hospitalities. He reproached himself for this, as he walked along to the old man's dying-bed. Yet he had a good reason—they had wanted him for Dora, and Dora had wanted him for herself, and their want had been too plainly shown, and had alarmed George ; in the most sensitive part of his nature. So that they had injured their own cause by their eagerness, and made their cousin almost a stranger within their doors. But he was sorry for it now, and he wished he had not been so foolish.

"I wonder what made the poor old man think of me, or wish to see me now," he thought within himself. For Dora's note had told him that her father had been taken much worse during the afternoon, and pronounced past hope by the doctors, and he had frequently expressed a wish to see "young George Treherne ;" so they hoped he would come to them, for he was growing hourly weaker. As he walked up the gravelled carriage-drive to the house, it all seemed so still and quiet, he fancied death must

be already there. But his cousin Dora opened the door to him, and her first words told him he was mistaken.

"Papa is sleeping now," she whispered, "but he was asking for you, George, up to the moment he fell off." She had evidently been watching for his arrival, for her hand was on the lock of the door almost as soon as he pulled the bell-handle. She never looked pretty (at least her cousin never thought she did; but perhaps that was because she was so like her brother William and the rest of their family, and relatives seldom see good looks in one another); but if she had, she would scarcely have done so now. She had been crying a good deal, and her dress and hair were in disorder, and she was tired with the sitting up and the anxiety. She was evidently ill at ease with her cousin, even when he had followed her into the sitting-room, and was inquiring the particulars of her father's attack. He had made her so by his evident avoidance of her society. The other daughters, Fanny and Emma, were in the room, all subdued and tearful, under the impending calamity, so that after he had made the usual inquiries, and been satisfied by Dora, George found the conversation beginning to flag. Dora would gladly have received comfort from him, had he offered it; but he did not.

He was afraid. He sat a little apart, silent, and apparently absorbed, as he leant upon his fragile walking-stick, bending it nearly double with the weight of his hand. They had sat so for nearly an hour—the whole house so silent that the ticking of the large clock in the hall seemed the only sound which broke upon the morning air; and then Emma rose, and said she would go and see how papa was going on; the result of which inquiry was the news that his eyes were again open, and that mamma wished cousin George would go up to her at once. So he rose and followed Emma to the sick chamber. His Aunt Lucy, as he had been used to call her—a stout, florid-complexioned woman, whom even weeping and anxiety could not render pale—rose at his entrance, and kissed him—a most unusual, almost unprecedented act on her part; but he felt its meaning—that he had come to the house of sorrow, and was doubly kin. To his question of how her husband was, she only shook her head, and directed his attention to the bed. George was shocked to see the rapid change a few days had made in the old man. He seemed to have shrunk to half his size, as he lay upon the pillow, his eyes half-closed, his lips moving in an indistinct string of half-meaning sentences.

"Speak to him, my dear," said poor Mrs. Treherne, urging George towards the bed. "Perhaps he may know you. He has been asking for you so many times during the last twelve hours."

"Do you know me, Mr. Treherne?" said George, thus appealed to; "I am your cousin, George Treherne."

The dull eyes opened a little, and fixed themselves with an unconscious stare upon his features, but the dying man did not speak.

"I don't think he knows who I am," whispered George to the wife, as she drew nearer to the bedside.

"Oh, he will, George, after a little," she said. "Pray, speak to him again."

He repeated something of the same kind a second time, and then a gleam of intelligence came into the dull eyes, and the parched lips unclosed.

"You are William," said the feeble, husky voice. "I am glad you are come, William; I wanted to see you before I went."

I have said before, that the young men were something alike in the eyes of strangers. The eyes of the father, made dim by approaching death, naturally mistook one for the other, particularly as his thoughts ran much on his absent son.

"He mistakes you for William," said the wife, in

a low tone. "Oh, George, it was a cruel thing his leaving England without seeing his father again. It has weighed on my husband's mind ever since, if it has not hastened his death."

George knew that his cousin's selfish threat, of spending the last month away from Milborough, had been carried into effect, so he had nothing to answer to this appeal.

"You are my eldest, William; I naturally look to you to be everything to your mother, after I am gone. You have never cared for me, boy, as I have for you; but I thought you wouldn't leave England without seeing me once again."

"Has he been rambling long?" asked George of his aunt.

"No; not before this. He scarcely spoke during the afternoon, except to inquire for you."

"Who's rambling?" inquired the sick man, rousing up a little; "is any one ill? Where is William? George, my dear boy, is it you? I wanted to see you to say good-bye."

"Here I am, sir," was the young man's answer.

"I wanted to say something to you, George. Let me see—what was it about?—something about my girl Dora. She's a good girl, George, and she loves—— Where's William?" he asked, breaking off

his sentence suddenly, as the delirious will. "He said he should leave England without seeing me again; but he cannot have done it—he never could have done it. Tell him to come here."

George looked at his aunt in dismay, and she, to quiet the dying man, said :

"Go and fetch him, George—go and fetch William."

George was glad of any excuse to leave the chamber. The few words his relative had spoken respecting Dora had frightened him. If his cousin were to become excited, or use entreaty on the subject, what could he do? When he got down-stairs, he saw the doctor, and asked him if he could be of any good in the sick-room.

"None at all," was the reply. "The disease has attacked the brain, and he will not recover his senses again. There has been a great pressure, sir, upon that organ lately."

George wondered if the pressure had been caused by his son's defection; and thought, if it had, he should scarcely have liked to have been in that son's place. It was well Mills had been instructed not to sit up for his master, for the grey morning had resolved itself into the brightness of day, before he slowly took his way back again to his barrack-room.

But before he re-entered it, he called at Sorel Cottage to tell his mother and sister that death had taken possession of one inmate at the Lawn.

"He died half an hour before I left," he said, in answer to their numerous inquiries. "There does not seem to have been any hope since the attack yesterday afternoon. It seems that William's departure, without taking leave of his father, preyed very much upon the poor old man's mind. I know I wouldn't be in William's shoes for something. I suppose we shall have him home again directly. His mother tells me that she intends writing at once, to urge his immediate return."

"I shouldn't think he would require much urging," remarked Mrs. Treherne, "considering that the Lawn becomes his, and some considerable sum a year. I forget what it is, but cousin Treherne was telling me not long ago, and I remember thinking that William would be very comfortably off, as well as the others."

"Well, I suppose Aunt Lucy and the children will continue to reside at the Lawn; but, as far as I am concerned, I should not care if Master William took the glory of his countenance elsewhere; only I shall be in Canada, I hope, by that time. Good-bye, mother. I shall go home, and turn in for a nap, for I feel as if I wanted one by this time."

CHAPTER XVI.

MEETING.

TEN o'clock in the morning, and the thermometer at 108° in the shade. The long, flat line of sand, and low white buildings of uniform height, which is the first glimpse the outward-bound traveller gains of the city of Madras, had come in sight; and the steamer, (no longer the "Nubian," with strict Captain Nelson on board; but the "Andalusia," with quite a different commander); with her decks newly holy-stoned, and everything about her looking startlingly clean and fresh, was steaming proudly into the Madras harbour, watched for by many an anxious eye from the place itself. In an hour she would be there—in an hour, many, many hearts would have met, that had not throbbed against one another for years. Oh! it was an anxious moment for most of them. Meeting, after a long absence, is almost as painful as parting. In the latter, we have at least certainty; the beloved object is before us; we see the eyes streaming with

tears; we hear the last words of affection; we feel the embrace, from which it is such pain to tear ourselves. It is agony; but what we have to bear we know. But, in meeting again after a lapse of years, there is a frightful doubt to fight with—a doubt which will intrude itself, to question if there will be no change—a sickening suspense to bear up against—a suspense which finds no relief, till the actual moment arrives, till we hear the familiar voice, feel the strong, nervous clasp, and look up into the dear eyes, to read there that the heart is unchanged and true. That moment pays us for the suspense and the sickness; but it is very hard to bear at the time. Grace Salisbury felt it to be so, though her feelings were not quite of this kind. Now that, in one short hour, Elfrida and she should meet her father and mother, doubts began to show themselves which she had never experienced before; and she felt nervous and unhappy in the prospect of the meeting before her. She was in her own cabin, sitting in her usual place on the sofa, beneath the port, with a book on her lap; but her thoughts far away from reading. She had left the deck half an hour before; so much there was uncongenial to her present feelings. She could not bear to hear the Miss Brownes laying bets with the cadets, as to whether they should guess which was their own

father, or not, when the boats came off from the shore. There seemed such a mockery of a sacred thing, in the very idea. The possibility of making a mistake on such a subject was sufficient to make Grace Salisbury feel melancholy. Apparently, she was not the only one who disliked the merry laughter going on overhead, and found them discordant to her own feelings. Poor Mrs. Canning, who had been separated from her husband for some time, whose infant had never been seen by its father, was nervously passing in and out of her cabin-door, walking about the saloons, and then re-entering her own apartment, to caution the ayah not to let the baby dirty its clean frock, or to re-arrange the curls on little Freddy's head, or to look round the tiny space for the last time, to see that nothing had been left behind. She longed for some one to talk to who felt like herself; for some woman before whom she might cry her nervousness away; and such a woman, notwithstanding the difference in their ages and positions, could Grace Salisbury have been to her; but she guessed what she was feeling, and she did not like to disturb her. This girl possessed the power of winning most hearts, and making even those older than herself, lean on her for support and comfort. No one would have thought of looking to wild Elfrida

for consolation of any kind, and yet Elfrida had changed wonderfully during the month of her engagement. Her bursts of gaiety and wild hilarity, which had drawn upon her the epithet of "mad," from Mademoiselle Hélène du Broissart, had become fewer, and farther between; her spirits were less equal, and it was no unusual thing, now, to see the laughter-loving Elfrida sit for hours together, thinking, whilst she hung over the steamer's side and watched the frothing waves thrown up by the paddle-wheels spread themselves out upon the blue, calm waters of the Indian Sea. But when her sister taxed her with these unusual moods, she had always the laughing but ready excuse to fall back upon, that gravity better became her more dignified position. As Grace sat and thought that morning, her mind was mostly occupied with her sister, and William Treherne. She could not think of their probable marriage yet with any degree of pleasure. She had not come to like her future brother-in-law any better during the month of closer intimacy which she had had with him. Indeed, she disliked him more. The phrase which Douglas Cameron had used, on the day he spoke of him to her, had never ceased to ring in her ears, nor had she ceased to apply it as a touchstone to his conduct, on almost every occasion, and

the result of her trials was, that she believed now, her informant was right, and that William Treherne had no more real heart than a stone. She had never spoken to Mr. Cameron on the subject since that time. The young man had seemed ashamed and sorry at first, that he had ever mentioned it to her, and had avoided her company for some days afterwards; but she had never tried to lure him back to her side, and consequently, he had after a time, returned of his own accord. Like a horse who is alarmed at a shadow starts and backs the more you try to force him past it, will generally go of his own accord, if he is allowed to examine the cause of his alarm for himself, so Douglas Cameron, vexed at having betrayed his heart's secret to one who might perhaps make an unworthy use of the knowledge, fought very shy, at first, of Grace's company for fear he should disclose still more than he had already done. But when he found she had kept his confidence, and respected the feelings which made him avoid her, he took courage to make the friend of her he needed. The conversation of that morning was never renewed between them; Elfrida was mentioned by Grace to him, as she would have been to any uninterested hearer; and Douglas Cameron was ready, with the shores of Madras in view, to confess himself

pretty nigh cured of that folly, and his greatest regret in leaving the vessel, was in parting with Grace, and not her sister. Where Douglas Cameron was concerned, therefore, it was, so far, so well. His heart was not made of so soft a material, as to receive an indelible impression which could not be got over; but the words he had used to Grace, with respect to William Treherne, were not to be unsaid. She remembered them as she sat on her cabin sofa that day—ay, and for years afterwards, when she had too fully proved them to be truth, for the creature she loved so well. She had sunk quite into a reverie and had thrown her thoughts forward to the future, and was no longer on board the “Andalusia,” when Mrs. Canning startled her from her day-dreams by entering her cabin.

“My dear Grace!” she said, “do you know at how many knots an hour we are going now? We shall anchor in half an hour. Have you anything more to pack up?”

“Only a few odds and ends,” said Grace, starting from her seat on the sofa. “Can I help you, Mrs. Canning, in anything?”

“No, thank you, my dear! my things have been fastened down this hour. I wish I had not done them so soon. I have reduced myself to idleness at the

very moment when I ought to have been working hard."

"Yes; these last minutes are very trying," said Grace; "and you must feel them more than we do, Mrs. Canning."

Mrs. Canning gave a tremendous gulp before she answered.

"Don't talk of it, my dear Grace, or I shall break down; and if I begin once, I shall never leave off till my husband's boat comes alongside."

Grace went up to the kind-hearted matron, and gave her a kiss.

"Keep up now, dear Mrs. Canning," she whispered; "it won't be long before we are all together again."

"No, thank God!" was the fervent reply. "Elfrida is taking it very easily, Grace. She has been on deck the whole morning, and I have heard her laughing so, just over my cabin port."

"Elfrida often laughs when she is very nervous," said her sister. "I shall go and fetch her down now, that she may put her own possessions together;" and Grace left the cabin as she spoke. On the stairs she encountered Mr. Cameron, and waited to let him pass.

"I was just coming down," he said, "to see if I could find you, to say a quiet good-bye, before the bustle begins on deck."

"There seems plenty of bustle there now," said Grace, smiling.

"Nothing to what it will be by and by," he answered, "when the boats come alongside. I shall see you in Madras, Miss Salisbury, shan't I?"

"I hope so. I am sure papa and mamma will like to thank you for your kindness to me on board."

"What nonsense!" he answered. "The thanks are all due on the other side. Talking of them: I have never again mentioned your kindness to me on that day—you know which; the day after we left Malta—but I have not forgotten it, Miss Salisbury."

"It was nothing," she said, shyly.

"Indeed, it was everything," he interposed, "and your friendship since has been better still. You need not be sorry for me any more, Miss Salisbury. I am all right, now."

"Really?" she said, incredulously.

"Really; it was only a passing fancy. I ought not to have bothered you with it; I would do anything for her, or for you too, now. But it never would have lasted in that fashion. I thought you would like to know that I am cured."

Grace thought the case would probably have been very different if his attachment had been returned; but, of course, she did not say so.

"I am very glad to know it," she said, as she shook him by the hand, "and I hope it will be a very long time before you want any doctoring again."

"I don't know that," he rejoined, laughing, "but if I do, I shall decidedly come to you. Good-bye, Miss Salisbury; I trust you will always let me look upon you as a friend."

"Yes, certainly; I shall be very glad to think you do," was her answer, as she parted from him.

As she emerged from the companion stairs upon the deck, she scarcely knew it again. Luggage of all kinds, from cumbersome deal cases, to overland trunks and light hat-boxes, was piled anyway, one package on the top of the other, just as it had been lifted from the hold. Passengers were walking round and round the heterogeneous mass, trying in despair to separate their belongings from the whole, and calling upon stewards and seamen in despair to extricate this, that, or the other, which they had recognized as their own, from the pile. "Very sorry, miss, can't attend to you now; luggage will all be shifted presently," or, "Coming, sir, directly; must attend to this gentleman first;" or, "Black case, ma'am, name Robinson? it's not up from the hold yet, I dare say; all out in time," were the various answers they received; but the promises of attend-

ance, of coming, and of the appearance of missing luggage, were alike forgotten, or possibly never intended to be fulfilled, at the time of extraction. And still the steamer cut rapidly through the water, to the place of her destination, amidst the voluble chatter, exclamations, surmises, and cries of despair about missing boxes, from a hundred tongues. As Grace paused at the head of the companion ladder, and shading her eyes with her hand from the glare of the sun, looked up and down the deck, for the figures she was in search of, it was some little while before she discovered where they were. When she did so, she found they were not amongst the rest of the excited passengers, but quietly sitting by themselves, at one end of the vessel. At least Elfrida was sitting, leaning over the side, gazing into the water, her favourite position, and William Treherne was lying on the bench at full length beside her, with his wide-awake over his face, and a cigar between his lips. Not so much over his face, however, that he could not see, for he caught sight of Grace, and called out:

“Holloa! Grace, come here, I want you.”

Grace and he had never made friends since the day of the engagement; that is to say, they had never said to one another that they were friends, but he

treated her with a species of familiarity which she had too much good feeling to resent, although it was not particularly grateful to her. She went up to them directly. Elfrida did not turn her face even then, but kept leaning far over the bulwarks, dangling her brown straw hat by its elastic band against the side of the steamer.

"You will lose your hat, Frida, if you do not take care," said Grace, as she came near to her sister. Are you not well, darling?" she added, as Elfrida gave no signs of hearing her. The girl lifted up her face then, and looked wearily into Grace's. Her eyes wore so woebegone an expression, that they attracted her notice at once.

"You should not sit looking at that glaring water so long at a time, Frida; you are really not well, my darling. I can see it in your eyes."

Elfrida said nothing then, but she put out her hand to Grace, and when she felt the clasp of her sister's, drew it round her own neck, and held it tightly there. Then Grace sat down beside her.

"She's all right," said William Treherne, "but she's been worrying herself about what the old gentleman will say to our engagement, like a little goose; and you want to break it off at once, don't you, Frida?"

"No, I don't," the girl returned, rather pettishly ;
"at least, I never said so."

"But you think so ; you know you do. By Jove, Grace, you should have seen the little vixen's eyes flashing just now. I had no idea she had such a temper. I have some thoughts of backing out of it myself. What would you say to that, Elfrida ?"

But his jesting did not seem to affect her, as lovers' jests are wont to do. She did not blush, or get angry, or even pretend to be angry ; she only clasped her sister's hand tighter in her own, and kissed it two or three times, silently.

"Take her away with you, Grace," resumed William, after a pause, "I can't make anything of her this morning. Now, don't worry yourself any more, Frida ; the thing will be as easily settled as possible. I have no fears on the subject, a letter, an interview, a confab, an impressive blessing, and hey, presto ! Mr. and Mrs. William Treherne, will appear upon the stage, ready to commence their travels in life."

"I should like to go down-stairs," said Elfrida to her sister.

"There, you see, Grace, nothing will do. I waste my eloquence in vain. Well, you have not much

time left now; so, if you have anything more to arrange, down you had better go."

Elfrida had risen by this time, and commenced to move away from the bench with her sister.

"Good-bye," cried William Treherne, after them, as he sipped a glass of beer, which stood on the bench beside him. "Here's reformation to you, Frida."

He didn't care for what she felt, he didn't even care to know what it was, or wherefore.

As the sisters entered their cabin together, Elfrida gave a kind of choking sob; Grace's arms were about her directly.

"What is it, my darling?" she exclaimed, "are you really afraid of what papa may say to your engagement?"

No, she was not afraid of that. William was in a very good position to marry. She did not suppose her father could make any reasonable objection.

"Then, what is it?" urged Grace. "You do not think for a moment, do you, Frida, that our father and mother won't love us?"

Elfrida stared at the idea.

"Oh! dear, no! I never had the least doubt of it," she answered. "I have never even thought of such a thing."

"Then what worries you, and makes you look so sad?"

The recalled memory seemed an unpleasant one. Elfrida's eyes filled with tears, but she dashed them away, and commenced busying herself with packing.

"It is nothing," she said, evasively; "I am nervous and hipped. The heat and excitement of landing have upset me. It is nothing."

She refused any further attempts at confidence on her sister's part. She avoided her expressions of tenderness, as if she were afraid to trust herself to them. She bustled about the cabin, twice as much as was necessary, and talked so incessantly about Madras, and her parents, and what she had heard upon deck, that Grace had not another opportunity of entering upon the subject. The steamer was now anchored, but though the girls heard the sound, and recognised it, they did not leave their cabin. No sooner was it down, than a great bustle was heard upon deck, and fresh voices, and fresh footsteps sounded in their ears. They listened, and their cheeks grew pale, and their hearts stayed beating, as each boat came alongside, and discharged its cargo; and the confused talking, and the exclamations of surprise or delight, told them that another of their fellow-passengers had been met and recognised. It

seemed to them as if they had been waiting for a long while, but, in reality, it was only about ten minutes from the time of anchorage, until William Treherne's voice was heard outside their cabin-door. Grace opened it at once.

"Your father's boat is alongside," he hurriedly exclaimed; "he will be here in a minute. He mustn't see me with you. Where's my Elfrida? Come and kiss me, darling."

But Elfrida had suddenly sunk upon her knees by the side of her berth, and was sobbing violently.

"No, no," she said, as he advanced towards her to say farewell; "don't touch me, William. I don't want you."

He looked angry, and bit his lips, and lingered for a moment by her side, trying to pull away her hands from before her eyes, in vain.

"As you choose," he said, carelessly, as he failed in his attempt. "I shall write to your father this afternoon, Frida. Good-bye, Grace. I mustn't stay here;" and he hastened from the general saloon just as Dr. Salisbury entered it. He was a fine-looking man, of about sixty, whose grey moustaches, and erect bearing, gave him more the appearance of a general in the army than of a physician on the Governor's staff. But he had lived all his life

amongst the army, and was so well versed in the intricacies of military manœuvres on a field-day, that he was often almost surprised himself, to think that he did not really belong to its ranks. As he advanced into the saloon, he was evidently trying hard to preserve a composure consistent with his sex and position, notwithstanding which, there was a moistened look about his eyes which resolved itself into real tears, as his girls heard his hurried inquiry of one of the stewards for the Miss Salisburys, and rushed into their father's arms. They had come forward, rather timidly at first, from the open door of their cabins, Grace foremost, and Elfrida rather behind her, as if she sought the protection of her sister's sheltering figure, but one look at their father's face was sufficient. Dr. Salisbury's grey eyes were too much like Elfrida's to appear strange to either of them, and with one impulse they sprang forward, and I do not know which was embraced first. I think he took them both in his arms together. Then he held them separately at a little distance, and examined their features, and as the calm eyes of Grace met his view, and then those of Elfrida, looking like some beautiful wild creature, who was subdued for the moment by love or pain, he could not have said which he thought the loveliest of the two; but then he was their father,

and his partiality was excusable; only they really were two daughters that any man might have been proud to own.

Dr. Salisbury had heard frequently from his friend old Mr. Treherne of the growing charms of his girls, but he had not quite believed the accounts, people are so apt to exaggerate such matters, when they want to please an absent parent. So he had scarcely thought so much about their personal appearance, as he started to meet them that morning, and now to find them so pretty, and looking so good and gentle, it quite overcame the poor old man. He blew his nose, and shook his head about, and poked his fingers into the corners of his eyes, as if he had cartloads of sand there, but it was of no avail if he intended it to deceive either Grace or Elfrida, as to the fact that papa cried when he first saw them.

"And oh! I love him so much for it, don't you Elfrida?" was Grace's criticism on the event. They did not see William Treherne again before they left the vessel, but Dr. Salisbury inquired after him.

"Did not a Mr. Treherne come out with you, my dear, a nephew or cousin of my old friend?"

Grace looked at Elfrida, but Elfrida was silent. So she answered the question herself, "Yes, papa."

"I should like to have shaken hands with him, my

dear, for my friend's sake ; but I suppose he will be sure to call upon us."

"I heard him say he intended doing so," was Grace's reply, and she wondered she said it so naturally, for she very much dreaded what her father's opinion on the matter of the engagement might be. There was not much more to detain them on board. Even as they left the saloon they encountered Mrs. Canning—no longer poor—leaning on the arm of her fine, soldierly-looking husband, who stopped when he saw Dr. Salisbury and his daughters.

"How do you do, Canning?" was the doctor's remark ; "let me introduce you to my daughters. Mrs. Canning, I can never thank you sufficiently for bringing them safely to me ; but I hope it will not be long before we see you at our house ; Mrs. Salisbury will be anxious to thank you also."

"In a day or two, Dr. Salisbury," was Mrs. Canning's reply, as she shook his offered hand, "as soon as we are a little settled down. Good-bye, dear Grace. Good-bye, Elfrida," and she passed on to her own cabin and her children.

So Dr. Salisbury took his pretty daughters upon deck, and amidst many farewells on all sides, saw them lowered into one of the boats which he had brought for them, and followed them himself. During

the time which intervened between their leaving the vessel and arriving at their father's house, Grace found plenty to do in expressing surprise at everything she saw, from the surf and the boat they landed in, to the natives, and shops, and houses which they passed, all looking so strange and unfamiliar to the eyes of the unsophisticated schoolgirl; but Elfrida noticed none of them, or if she did, she never spoke of what she saw; she only sat quietly in the back of the carriage, looking out of the windows, as they rolled past each fresh sight, and not even Grace's exclamations of surprise drew forth any corresponding expression of feeling on her part.

Presently Dr. Salisbury said, "We are in the Adyar now; we shall soon be at home;" and then a silence fell upon Grace as well as her sister. They all three felt that a solemn moment was approaching, when the mother should receive back that part of herself from which she had been so long separated. Not another word was spoken, till the carriage dashed through two large white pillars, which marked the entrance to the grounds, and quickly traversing the drive, stopped under the portico of a handsome house. The native man-servant let down the steps, Dr. Salisbury got out, and handed out his daughters one by one, but all the words he said were, "In the hall,

dears." Grace stopped at the bottom of the flight of steps; she felt at first as if it was too much, and she couldn't go in, but she caught sight of a figure standing in the hall, with a handkerchief in her hand; it darted through the girl's heart, what she must be suffering, and with an effort she ran up the steps. For one moment she halted again on the threshold of the door, but arms were held open to her, and with one cry of "Mother!" all the pain and anxious suspense was over. I pass over this meeting for a mother's feelings, a mother's tears, tears and feelings such as these, are sacred things, a stranger may not intermeddle with them. The father, doubtless, had felt much at regaining his children, but he was ready to confess himself, that it could be as nothing, compared to what the woman's heart must feel, who had first brought them into the world with anguish, and then parted with them, and had her whole soul riven by the separation. Mrs. Salisbury was not an old woman; her eldest daughter Mary was not more than five-and-twenty; but the cruel necessity which had obliged her to resign the care of her infants, from their constitutions being unfitted for the climate of India, almost as soon as they could lisp, had preyed so much upon her own health and spirits, as to make her appear much older even than her husband. Her

features were delicate and very like Grace's, and her figure was small; but judging only from her thin and colourless face, and her hair, which was nearly white, you might have thought she was the girls' grandmother, instead of mother. But they saw none of this, they only noted the kind motherly glances which turned from one to the other, as if she could never look at them sufficiently, only felt the caressing motherly hand which lay so lightly, yet so firmly, about the neck of each. There was little done that day but talking, all their past lives seemed to resolve themselves into an epitome of news for mamma, and papa; things that they had done, people they had seen, places they had visited, all of which had been related before, by letters from themselves, were now recounted, and received with equal pleasure by their auditors, as if they were really pieces of news. But though both Dr. and Mrs. Salisbury attempted two or three times to approach the subject of their voyage out, they found the topic a dead failure. Their questions were answered, but not pursued, till at last their parents concluded they had not enjoyed themselves, on their passage to India.

"I suppose you found the regulations on board the 'Nubian' rather strict, eh?" said their father, "I

know my friend Nelson is rather particular, no dancing allowed, is there?"

"No, papa," said Grace, "but we had plenty on board the 'Andalusia.'"

"More's the pity," said her father, laughing, "boys and girls had much better wait to dance till they dance on shore; a great deal of harm comes of it sometimes. How many young ladies got engaged coming out, Frida, eh?"

Grace trembled and grew pale, she thought the secret would come out now; but she was surprised at Elfrida's composure; she answered quite calmly:

"I don't know, papa, I never asked them."

"Well, I can't say I much care," was his reply, "so long, as neither of you did so."

Elfrida rose from the couch on which she was seated, and walked to the other side of the room, apparently to examine some exotics there. Grace presently joined her, the room was so large that she could speak without fear of being overheard.

"Are you nervous, Frida, dear?" she asked.

"No; why should I be?" was the answer, but her hand shook, as she fingered the flowers before her. Servants were constantly entering the room with notes and papers for Dr. Salisbury's perusal, but Elfrida did not look nervous or suspicious at any one

of them. Grace wondered at her self-possession, she could not but believe it was assumed. At last the long day was over; what a great deal they seemed to have done and seen since its commencement! Mrs. Salisbury was anxious her girls should go early to rest, feeling certain they would be very tired on the morrow; and though Grace was quite ready to comply with her mother's request, thankful that bedtime had arrived without the epistle from William Treherne having disturbed their first day's happy communion, Elfrida seemed more disposed to linger about, and put off the hour of dismissal; but at last Mrs. Salisbury's reiterated entreaties had their effect, and Grace and Elfrida found themselves in their several apartments. They were not to sleep together any longer, but their rooms opened into one another, so they were almost like one. As Grace walked first into Elfrida's room she said to her, as she watched her taking down the heavy coils of her hair: "I am so glad Mr. Treherne has put off his letter till to-morrow, ain't you, Frida?"

"Why should I be?" she said again, as she had answered to her sister's other question; "it must come to-morrow, if not to-day. I feel sleepy now, Grace, dear. Good-night." And she held up her mouth for the nightly kiss, as she spoke. Her sister

gave it, and walked into her own room. She expected Frida would certainly leave the door open between them, but to her surprise she shut it, nor was it again unclosed. Grace could not help thinking of it as she lay down to sleep. She thought of William Treherne and the engagement, and Frida's composure, and came to the conclusion that her sister was really much more confident and happy about the marriage than she had suspected lately that she was.

Poor little happy, confident Frida! If Grace could have peeped in between those folded doors, the closing of which made her feel so jealous, she would have seen her young figure thrown, half-undressed, across her bed, her bright hair lying in confusion about her neck and shoulders, and found that the pillow in which she had buried her tear-bedabbled face was the only obstacle which prevented her loving sister from hearing the sobs which shook her tender frame, and were the true language of her alarmed and anxious heart!

CHAPTER XVII.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

BUT long after Grace's conjectures and Elfrida's tears had lost themselves in sleep, their father and mother were still sitting up, engaged in earnest conversation, of which they formed the topic. The letter from William Treherne had arrived; it had been sent from the club, some little while after the girls had retired to their bedrooms. To say that Dr. Salisbury was surprised on receiving it, would not be a right description of his feelings. He had lived so long in India, had seen so much of this kind of thing resulting from aboard-ship intimacy, that he had almost anticipated, certainly dreaded, lest the same misfortune might happen to either of his daughters, for he called it a misfortune; and there is no doubt that he was terribly annoyed—all the more so, because he foresaw little prospect of escape from it. If it had been one of the young cadets on board, who had offered himself as his future son-in-law, or even a man

not known to him personally, such as Mr. Cameron, he probably would have refused the proposal at once, or at least stipulated that the young people should not consider themselves engaged, until Elfrida had seen a little more of the world. But this man was a friend, so-called, of his own; that is to say, he was well known to him; he was, moreover, a relation of Dr. Salisbury's greatest chum, in earlier days—Mr. Treherne, of Ariscedwyn—and was in the possession of a good staff appointment, able to keep his daughter in the position he had a right to expect for her, and had the anticipation of a very comfortable property, in the event of his father's death.

Dr. Salisbury bit his lips, and ransacked his head again and again for a reasonable objection to the marriage, and could find none. Then he broke the news to his wife. On her it fell like a thunderbolt. Her husband had warned her of the possibility—nay, probability—of such an occurrence, but she had refused to entertain the idea. To her it came almost as the announcement would have done that her newly regained children would leave her again on the ensuing day. She had blessed herself in the thought that she had at last got what was her own again, when, lo! she was told that it was not her own. Dr. Salisbury informed her of William Treherne's letter as gently

as he could, but before he had finished, she was trembling all over like an aspen leaf, and terribly agitated. At first she was incredulous as to the fact of the engagement, but of that there was no doubt.

"Mr. Treherne is a gentleman, my dear," said Dr. Salisbury, "and here is his letter."

It was a very good letter, well worded and well written. He began by reminding Dr. Salisbury of the friendship between himself and his relative, Mr. Treherne; and then proceeded to touch on the knowledge they possessed of one another, asserting that it was this knowledge that had made him seek the society of Miss Elfrida Salisbury, until he found that he had lost his heart to her; that in an unguarded moment he had spoken to her, and found she was likewise attached to him, and willing to engage herself to him; so that all he had to say was, that he trusted Dr. Salisbury, taking into consideration his position and prospects, would not refuse to sanction the engagement, and to give his consent to a speedy marriage, &c., &c.

Then Mrs. Salisbury was incredulous as to the possibility of her husband giving such sanction or consent; but here his silence, when she urged him to say that he would not, convinced her that he was not on her side, and she fairly broke down.

"Oh, Robert!" she said, whilst the tears coursed themselves, one after another, down her faded cheeks, "I am so bitterly disappointed. I have so prayed and hoped that I should have kept them with me for a little while. You know how I have had to part with them, one after another, almost as soon as they were born, and all I have lived upon, these many dreary years, has been the hope of seeing my children again. I have not been permitted, like other mothers, to have the training of their infant minds; even their first steps have been watched over by other eyes, their first words listened to by strangers' ears. For their sakes and yours, I have resigned all the blessed privileges of a mother. I have borne all the pain, twice the pain, God knows! but none of the joy. What has kept me in life, Robert, until now, if it has not been the thought that I *could* not die until I had seen my own children again? Have you not yourself used their dear names to rouse me, and begged me to make an effort for their sakes, when weakness has taken such enervating hold of me, that nothing but a strong effort on my own part, would have permitted me to rise up again? Mary left me almost as soon as she came out, and now Elfrida is to go, and I shall only have Grace left; and I suppose she will be the next, and then I shall be quite alone! Oh, my

God, it is very hard !" and the feeble hands went up to cover her working features, as she burst into an hysterical flood of tears.

It *was* very hard, and Dr. Salisbury felt it to be so. He who had watched her gradually fade and age before her time, beneath the exile she had maintained for his sake, could best appreciate what she felt now at this fresh disappointment for her maternal feelings. He went up to her bowed figure, and gently put his arms about her.

"My dear Mary," he said, "you exaggerate into an evil what ought to be matter for rejoicing. I am sure, when you are a little calmer, and can see this thing in its proper light, that you will acknowledge it is not such a cause for tears as you imagine it now. You know I have felt for you, in your repeated separations from your children ; if I could have let you remain at home with them, how gladly I would have done so, but it was for the sake of these very children that I have been obliged to toil on at my profession in this country, and you have staid to cheer me, and make my life tolerable, which it would not have been without you. That should comfort you, my dear, if anything does ; you have always done your duty. And see how much we have to be thankful for ! Our girls have been permitted to rejoin us, more than all

we had expected them to be, blooming, healthy, accomplished, and ready to love us ; what more could we desire ? Is it likely that what attracts us so much should not also attract others ? Under any circumstances, we should probably not have been able to keep them by our sides long."

"But so soon," murmured the poor mother ; "here to-day, and gone to-morrow. Oh, Robert, say you will refuse to consent to the marriage taking place yet a while !"

"Mary," he answered, and his voice was very grave this time, "I cannot say yet whether this marriage will take place at all, or not ; it depends entirely upon circumstances ; but I know that you are distressing yourself needlessly on the subject, and not looking at the probability of it as you ought to do. Try, rather, my dear, to remember that we have received Elfrida back again safe and sound, that no disease has been permitted to carry her off before we saw our child again, that she has been preserved to us through many years, and been brought through a dangerous voyage safely to our sides. The worst that we anticipate for her is what most parents would rejoice at—an honourable marriage. Even that is not certain. You may rest assured, I shall not give my daughter away, without ascertaining that her heart is bent upon

it. Elfrida shall be a free agent in this matter. Surely if her happiness is concerned, her own mother would not stand in her light?"

"No," said Mrs. Salisbury, as she dried her eyes, "I see I have been wrong as usual, my dear, and you are right; I will try and look at it in the same hopeful manner that you do."

"That's right," said her husband, encouragingly, "a mother who has sacrificed so much for her children already won't stick at surrendering a mere wish, if it is for her daughter's good. Besides, my dear Mary, if Elfrida does marry Treherne, she probably would not even leave Madras."

"That would be nearly the same as if I had her here," answered his wife, trying to smile; "so I will not be so foolish again, dear Robert, until I have more cause to be so. And now good-night, for if you are not coming to bed yet, I think I had better go by myself, as I am very tired."

"Good-night, my dear," was his rejoinder, "I shall not be long after you."

But his idea of being long was different to most people's, for he sat for several hours by himself, after his wife left him, deeply immersed in thought. He had made light of the surprise which had come to both of them that night, before her, but it was a very

disagreeable one to him also, though not for the same cause as it was to his wife. Men love in a different manner to women; they do not think so much of having the creature they love always in their sight, or near at hand, as women do; they do not feed their affection on a thousand little daily attentions and offices; they do not feel content, if they can only sit in the same room as their beloved ones, hear their voices, and watch their movements, as they go to and fro. Men love, perhaps, on a grander, larger scale, but it is not so satisfying. They are not content with loving, and nothing more. Dr. Salisbury would rather his girls had both come out to him heart-whole; but he knew that if they had, it would probably have not lasted long in a place like India, where they would be daily subjected to attention. The fact of the engagement therefore mattered little. The question was, who had Elfrida engaged herself to? Several old stories and scandals, which he had heard relative to William Treherne's sayings and doings, came floating back into his mind, and made him feel uneasy.

"I must have those cleared up," he said to himself; "and yet, if the man really loves her, it seems hard he should be deprived of a wife who might steady him, because of a few tales of past wildness. I wish he had been a greater favourite of mine," he added to

himself; "I never liked his eyes, they are not sufficiently open and straightforward looking; however, it is not fair to judge a man by his outward appearance. If he really loves my little simple-minded schoolgirl, he must have a taste for what is pure and innocent. God grant he may not have deceived himself, or her.

I don't think Dr. Salisbury had many hours' sleep that night, for when he went to bed it was long past midnight, and he was up again with the dawn. People transact business early in India, and breakfast-time sees most of the hard work for the day over; so that William Treherne was not surprised to see Dr. Salisbury's carriage drawn up to the club door, shortly after six o'clock the next morning. He had evidently expected some such visit, for he was ready dressed, and waiting in-doors to receive him; and the coffee service, which was ready for two, showed that he anticipated a friendly interview. He did not appear in the character of a very diffident lover to Dr. Salisbury's eyes, his bearing was as self-possessed and confident as ever.

"Ah! my dear doctor," he exclaimed, as he rushed forward with extended hand to meet his visitor, "I quite expected you would drop in to coffee with me this morning. There's no time for settling business

like this, though I trust *our* little business will soon be disposed of. I hope my note didn't give you a bad night's rest, doctor, eh?"

Dr. Salisbury did not quite know at first what answer to make to this rather pithy question, but presently he replied:

"The subject of your letter, Treherne, is rather an important one, and not to be discussed in a hurry. As you anticipate, I did come to speak to you about it. If you wish it, we can enter upon the matter at once."

"I'm ready, doctor, to answer any questions on the past, present, or future; but let me give you a cup of coffee first."

"No, I thank you," said Dr. Salisbury, rather astonished at his coolness, "I had tea before I left home. My daughter's happiness is very dear to me, Mr. Treherne, as you may suppose."

"Oh! of course, of course," said Treherne, carelessly, as he helped himself to coffee; "but I trust it may be secured, Dr. Salisbury, by her marriage with me."

"I trust it may, sir, certainly, if that marriage ever comes to pass. I have not yet spoken to Elfrida, or ascertained her feelings on the subject; but I conclude, from your letter, that you are confident that her heart is your own."

"You had better ask her that question yourself," rejoined the younger man, with an air that said he had no fear about it; "but, Dr. Salisbury, I believe you can have no objection to find with my present station in life. My appointment is remunerative, as you know; I have a few hundreds a year of my own now, which I should settle upon Elfrida at once, and the prospect of the Lawn property, at Milborough, on my father's death, with a thousand a year. Not so long to wait for that, perhaps, either, for the old gentleman is very shaky now."

Dr. Salisbury looked sternly at the young man as he said this; but if he noticed the look, he did not seem in the least abashed by it.

"Your worldly prospects, Treherne," he said, in answer, "are all that I could desire for my daughter; I have been obliged to live by my profession myself, and my children have no right to look for more in their husbands; but worldly affairs are the least important part of the question to me."

"What is it you want, sir?" demanded Treherne with surprise; "I love your daughter, I cannot say more."

"I believe you do," answered Dr. Salisbury, "or that you believe you do; but love is not all that is requisite for her happiness. There have been stories

about you, Treherne—you will pardon my mentioning the subject, but there must be no reserve between us—stories which have reflected upon your moral life and sense of honour. Things which are passed over in a single man with a mere comment, assume a very different appearance when the happiness of a woman, and so young a woman, is confided to his keeping. Can you assure me, Treherne, that those acquaintanceships, or whatever we may call them, and habits of your past days, are quite broken off and done away with, before I say that I will trust my girl into your hands, and expect you to keep faithfully to her alone?”

The young man had looked very uneasy whilst the doctor was thus addressing him. The fact is, the stories alluded to had been anything but pleasant ones to remember. Hints of bribery in an official capacity, of seduction, and other dishonourable acts, are not exactly the things one cares to have recalled to one's mind, just as one has made a proposal of marriage to a young and innocent girl. The stories had been hushed up, partly by interest, but they were pretty well founded.

William Treherne looked ashamed of himself for the first time, and lost his vantage-ground.

“Those are very old stories, sir,” he ventured

presently to plead : "young men will sow their wild oats. I am older now, and wiser."

"Not such wild oats as that, I trust, Mr. Treherne," said Dr. Salisbury, sternly. "If I had a son, I should be sorry to think it. However, if you will give me your word of honour, that, whatever they were, they are past, I will try to forget I ever heard of them, for Elfrida's sake."

"They are past, Dr. Salisbury. I have been twenty months in England."

"And the feeling for them is past, Mr. Treherne? You can look me in the face, and say that?"

"Certainly, Dr. Salisbury, or I should not be wishing to take a wife to myself. I have never seen the woman I have cared for, before I met your daughter; and if you don't give her to me, I shall never take any one else; I know that." And for once he seemed to feel and to speak earnestly.

Dr. Salisbury was touched by his tone and manner, and answered candidly :

"Treherne, if her happiness is also as deeply concerned in it, you shall have her; but my wife is very much opposed to your wish for a speedy marriage. It seems as if she had only regained her child to lose her."

"What is the use of delay, sir?" urged Treherne.

"It has been a month's engagement already. A month or two can make no difference. I have been offered the collectorship of Shandydrandrum since I returned; but if Mrs. Salisbury will consent to the marriage taking place in, say, a month, I will give up any thoughts of leaving Madras; so that Elfrida may not be separated from either her sister or yourselves."

"It is very good of you to say so, Treherne, and I believe it will go far to make Mrs. Salisbury fall in with your wishes. I agree with you, that if a thing is to be, the sooner it is over the better. 'There's many a slip,' you know."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of that, sir," said Treherne, laughing: "I'm quite safe."

So, after an assurance that he would speak to Elfrida at once on his return, and put him out of suspense as soon as possible, Dr. Salisbury left the young man, and re-entered his carriage.

"He seems very confident about Elfrida's loving him," was the old man's soliloquy, as the carriage drove rapidly with him in the direction of his home. "She must have told him she cared for him very much, or he would not seem so certain of the fact. Well, I suppose an old fellow like myself is no judge of such things; but if *I* was a girl, that wouldn't have been the man to my taste."

It was eight o'clock before he reached the Adyar again, and in the meanwhile the sisters had risen. Grace's eyes had opened first upon the figure of her mother sitting beside her bed. In a moment the past had flashed upon her memory, and she knew where she was. On first catching a glimpse of the tear-stained, harassed face which bent over her, she had asked, "Is anything the matter?" But a minute had sufficed to make her see that such a question was quite unnecessary. Elfrida, and Elfrida's engagement had come back to her mind, and she guessed that it was in her mother's also.

"Mamma," she said, "you know all about it: I can see it in your eyes."

"Oh, Grace!" said her mother, "why didn't Elfrida tell us herself? It was such a shock."

"You could scarcely have expected her to do so, mother. She is very young, and it was not her part, I am sure she suffered great anxiety all yesterday because you were still in ignorance."

"When did it take place, Grace?"

"The proposal, mamma? At Malta, I believe; at least Elfrida told me of it the day afterwards."

"And does she love him, Grace?"

The question startled the girl. She had asked her sister the same thing at the time of the engagement,

but lately she had not thought of the possibility of its being otherwise. Elfrida had always behaved towards William Treherne as if she cared for him ; at least Grace thought so ; but, then, she was unversed in such matters. She imagined, because Elfrida acceded with promptitude to everything that was requested of her by her lover, that because she sat by him on deck, and sang or danced, as he requested her, and called him by his Christian name, that she would not have given these proofs of love, unless she had felt it. But she was ignorant that a woman oftenest loves when she is shy and reserved, and jealous of others seeing any open marks of her attachment ; and that a woman who really loves can oftener take pleasure in thwarting the wishes of the man she cares for, in order to test his devotion, and prevent his seeing the full extent of her own, than in following blindly the path he exhorts or commands her to pursue.

Women are strange creatures sometimes. Where they most love and admire, they often appear to be most indifferent, particularly if they are pursued ; but if they are scorned and uncared-for, they sometimes waste their whole lives in useless pining after the unattainable, thereby proving they are not so widely different in their feelings to men, who follow

after hardest what there is least chance of overtaking.

But Grace knew nothing of all this. She had not mixed sufficiently in the world ; she had been too much immured between the walls of the College at Blackheath. She had thought Elfrida behaved to William Treherne as she should behave herself under similar circumstances : so her mother's question almost frightened her.

" Oh, I suppose so, mamma," was her answer ; " she seems to do so. Why shouldn't she ?"

" There is no reason otherwise, my child. I only asked you the question, supposing you knew all about it. It is a heavy blow to me." And Mrs. Salisbury sighed deeply.

" But, mamma, she need not marry at once, even if she is engaged, need she ?"

" I know nothing about it, dear : your father will arrange all that. He is with Mr. Treherne now. The gentleman himself, in his letter, urged a speedy marriage, but nothing is decided yet. Let us go and call Elfrida, Grace ; your father will want to see her on his return."

Grace jumped out of bed, and the mother and daughter proceeded together, into Elfrida's room. How lovely she looked, as she lay upon her back,

stretched out, as people do who sink wearily to sleep ! One arm was under her head, but nearly hidden by the masses of golden hair which strayed about her pillows. Her cheeks were flushed with the unusual heat and excitement ; whilst the slight covering which was over her form showed every line of her supple, slender figure. She looked like a lovely tinted statue, who had just received her breath of life at the instinct of some Pygmalion's prayer, and would rise the next moment, an incarnation of youth, health, and beauty !

Mrs. Salisbury stood and gazed, till the tears filled her eyes again, and ran down her cheeks.

Grace saw her distress, and pressed closer to her.

"How lovely she is, Grace !" was her mother's whispered sentence.

"Yes, mother, and you would not have that lovely face clouded with pain, would you, even to keep her by your side ?"

"No ; you are right, my child," answered Mrs. Salisbury, kissing her forehead. "I have been very selfish ; your father said the same ; but I must try and get over it."

"Shall I wake her, mother ?"

"No, not yet," said poor Mrs. Salisbury, almost agitated by the idea. "I couldn't speak to her yet.

"I'd rather your father saw her first. Grace, she would see what I think of it, in my face. Let me go to my room, and then wake her, dear, as soon as you like."

And the poor mother escaped to her own apartment, and Grace roused her sister, and helped her to dress. She waited until she was dressed, before she told her that her father and mother knew of her engagement; but Elfrida appeared rather relieved that it should be so.

I pass over the interview which followed, between her and her parents, it was so much a repetition of the conversation she had held with Grace when she told her of the proposal, and the one Dr. Salisbury had had that morning with William Treherne. Throughout it, she maintained that the engagement had taken place with her own consent, and that her wish was to marry Mr. Treherne; only once she was about to falter, when her father was pressing her very hard, as to whether she really loved him, whether she was sure she knew her own heart, and was not deceiving herself.

"For, my love, it is a very important question," added Dr. Salisbury; "it is almost like a matter of life and death. Remember, there is no going back afterwards."

Then, for a moment, she seemed to hesitate, and look inwards upon her own heart.

"Did you ever imagine that Mr. Treherne cared for you, before that day at Malta?" urged the father, in his wish to be assured that she was really and deeply interested in the matter.

His words recalled her to herself. The remembrance of the night on shore at Malta, of the old captain's remarks, of the passengers' comments, all came back to her.

"For I could bear anything sooner," continued Dr. Salisbury, "than to think one of my daughters could behave in anything like an unseemly manner, or accept a man's offer of marriage, before she was assured he cared for her, and she for him."

Yes, Elfrida was quite assured of the fact—assured of it from the first day she met him. Why should papa think she didn't care for him? Her father denied having had any such idea; he had only been anxious to test the truth. If her heart was really engaged, he would not prevent her marrying the man she cared for. He had only to bid God bless her, and then give her over to her mother's kisses and congratulations. A few hasty lines addressed to William Treherne soon informed that gentleman that Dr. Salisbury having ascertained

from his daughter's own lips that she was as anxious for the marriage as he was, had no further reason for withholding his consent to a formal engagement between them, and Mrs. Salisbury would be happy to see Mr. Treherne at dinner that evening, at seven o'clock. He came of course, happy, triumphant, and confident as usual. When he entered the drawing-room, the ladies were already assembled there. When he had renewed his acquaintanceship with Mrs. Salisbury, and shaken hands with Grace, Dr. Salisbury watched him narrowly, as he walked up to the chair where Elfrida was sitting; she rose to meet him as he advanced, but showed no other signs of confusion; she did not blush, or even look down as he kissed her lips, as a pledge that their engagement was ratified; she only glanced timidly towards the direction of her mother and Grace, and then reseated herself. As he saw it, Dr. Salisbury turned away with a deep sigh. He was an old man, but he had not yet forgotten how girls look, when the men they love touch their lips in public. He told himself he was a fool to dwell upon such little things, but the thought remained in his mind, and rankled there. The whole party appeared relieved when dinner was announced. The conversation at the table was pretty general, only the *fiancée* was silent, but that perhaps was natural under

the circumstances. But as Mrs. Salisbury entered the drawing-room again with her daughters, she drew Elfrida towards her with her arm, and fondly kissed her.

"Sit by me, darling," she said. "I feel I shall not have my youngest with me long." But Elfrida could not trust herself to anything like sentiment that evening. She escaped from her mother's caressing hand, as if it pained her, and flew to the piano.

"You have not heard me sing yet, mamma," she exclaimed, "it is what I am fondest of doing." And then, after playing the preliminary symphony, her voice broke out into that splendid air, the "*Cujus Animam*," from Rossini's "*Stabat Mater*," and the grand notes pealed through the large room with a startling effect.

"I had no idea she had such a voice," whispered Mrs. Salisbury to Grace, almost awe-struck.

"Isn't it beautiful?" said Grace, in the same tone; "I could listen to her singing for ever."

It was a lovely voice, a fresh, pure soprano, but almost uncultivated, with the exception of an hour a week, from the singing-master at Miss Plimpton's. In listening to it, you might have fancied that you heard some bird; some thrush or blackbird singing in the morning for the sake of singing; so fresh, and wild, and flute-like were her notes. It was a voice that

might have been done anything with, but at present it was unfinished, very beautiful and promising, but nature without art ; however, Grace and her mother were not musicians enough to find this out. They loved the singer, and thought the singing perfect.

"I think Mr. Treherne will not be able to sit very long over his wine, with this going on," next observed Mrs. Salisbury.

"Oh ! he doesn't care for music at all, mamma," was Grace's answer ; "it bores him, he says."

"What a pity, with such a voice as hers. I hope he will let her keep it up, though ?"

"Oh ! no fear," laughed Grace, "Frida will do as she likes, mamma, she is not very amenable to discipline ; Frida, dear, sing 'When I was young,' I am sure mamma will like that."

And Mrs. Salisbury listened to the young rich voice, as it adapted itself to the plaintive notes of the song in question, till the tears dropped silently from her eyes upon her lap, as the days when she was young came back with force to her memory, with the joys which had vanished with them in their train. The music did not bring in Mr. Treherne one moment sooner than he would have entered the drawing-room otherwise, although Dr. Salisbury made one or two efforts to join his family. But the

conversation they were engaged in was too interesting, the description of prospective property, the mode of settlements, and the sources from which they were to be derived ; the future prospects, and the present plans, were all discussed, and described again and again, till Dr. Salisbury was quite clear and satisfied on that score. Then Mr. Treherne began to plead his cause for the marriage taking place in the following month. He should wish to be settled as soon as possible ; with the prospect of so soon taking a wife he did not care to furnish a house for himself, nor would he do so for her, until the day was fixed. Until that was the case, the club would have to be his home. He should not be able to work properly, nor to do anything properly, until Elfrida Salisbury was Elfrida Treherne. Dr. Salisbury believed all he said ; he saw himself no reason for delay, so he gave the young man his promise that the marriage should take place at the time he wished. I think it was almost drawn from him, and that he was sorry for it the minute it had passed his lips, but anyway the deed was done, he had given it.

The rest of the evening passed in a very formal, ceremonious manner, though every one tried to be agreeable ; the effort was too great not to be seen through, and I am sure they were all delighted when

the time for parting came, and each one might be permitted to indulge their own thoughts. I do not know how it transpired, or by whom, but certain it is, that by the close of that evening, every one in the house knew, not only that Miss Elfrida Salisbury was engaged to be married to Mr. William Treherne, but that the marriage was fixed to take place early in the ensuing month of December.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOTHER AND SON.

GEORGE Treherne was in his mother's drawing-room. He had just returned from attending the funeral of his cousin, and had turned into the green garden-door of Sorel cottage, as he came back. The little drawing-room was empty; but he did not wish for company. What he had just heard and seen had softened his heart and subdued his nature, and he wanted to be alone, to think. He sat down on the little couch, which seemed more as if it was made to look at than to sit on, it was so small; the same couch from which poor Mary Fairfax had let out her cherished secret, and gazed steadfastly on the ground, and thought. So many of the solemn words he had been listening to, were ringing in his ears still—one or two he could not get rid of, do what he would. "The bitter pains of eternal death;" "The certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life;" those were the two sentences which kept changing

places in his mind, as first one, and then the other, mentally fell, with solemn import, on his ear. He was, as I have said before, a deep-thinking man. There were few, indeed, who would have imagined that the lively and apparently gay-hearted Captain Treherne would have had his whole soul arrested by such words as those. He had often attended funerals before—military funerals—some of them grand spectacles, with the troops in full dress; all of them deeply solemn ones, accompanied with the mournful measure of the “Dead March,” and ending with the sharp discharge of three volleys rattling over the lowered coffin. And yet, no funeral had affected him so much as this one had done. In the perfect stillness which embosomed the peaceful cemetery where they had laid his cousin’s dust, in the very absence of clanking accoutrements, measured marching, and discharge of fire-arms, the touching pathos which is breathed throughout the burial service of our Church—a pathos which, were it not for the glorious hope which accompanies it, would be almost too much to listen to—had seemed to come home to his heart as it had never done before. George Treherne was not of a sentimental disposition; it was no sorrow for the dead, kindled at the eleventh hour, because his feelings had been worked upon, that disturbed

him now. He believed his cousin had been truly a good man; that is to say, a man who had tried to do good, not for the hope of reward, but simply because it was his Master's will. If he thought of him at all, it was with a certain assurance that, as far as he was concerned, all was right, and the service read over his poor remains could not speak too hopefully of a resurrection to eternal life. He was not thinking of the mourners either. Aunt Lucy was not a woman, he knew, of very deep feeling; he could imagine after a very few months, she would find herself comforted. The girls took too much after their mother. The boys, two of whom had attended the funeral as chief mourners, were cubs, nothing more. No; George had no thought, just at present, for the survivors. His mind was concentrated on one idea—the idea of his own death. He saw that day—who could tell him how far off, or how near, in which others should stand about his open grave, as he had stood that day at his cousin's, and then——? He had no fear of death, he would have jeopardized his life any day; he did it constantly in his various mad pranks, and feats of skill or daring. He would have led a forlorn hope; he was just the man to do it. He had no clinging home-ties to fetter his spirit, and bind it with strong cords

earthwards, when it dreamed of soaring. He was a free man, free in heart and body, with an ambitious spirit, straining after any opportunity of displaying itself in successful enterprise. He was not the one to shrink from anything. Why then did a few words, spoken by a fellow-creature, have the power to chain his thoughts, and force him to look inwards upon himself; the power to make him think of his own death, and for the first time shrink from the contemplation? "The pains of eternal death." "Deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death." He who read the words had prayed for all there—for all who stood about that grave. George felt with an inward satisfaction, he would have been loth to acknowledge, that he had been included in that prayer. Almost unconsciously, he repeated it for himself; not really, his lips never moved, but his heart said, "Deliver me not into the bitter pains of eternal death." No one knew of it; but it was audible enough to himself: he started, and looked round the room, as the now familiar words again rang upon his heart, as if there must have been spectators of his weakness. But there was no one there but himself.

"What folly," he said half aloud, as he rose from the sofa, walked to the window, and tried to rouse

himself. But he did not mean what he said. His step across the room was not so light as to be unheard, if the people up-stairs were quiet themselves. So a bedroom-door above opened at the sound, and a voice called out, "Is that you, George? Come up to my bedroom;" and he answered, "All right, mother!" and commenced an ascent to the upper story, making the lightly-built staircase creak again, beneath his sturdy tread.

Mrs. Henry Treherne's bedroom quite bore out the character she had acquired for good taste. Every part of it was in perfect order; and although it was a bedroom, it looked just as comfortable to sit in, as any drawing-room, far more so than some. Near the fire—for the autumn had nearly run its course, and the weather was chilly and damp—two luxurious arm-chairs, with a table between them, on which were her writing and working materials, seemed to invite the beholder to sit down at once, and unbosom himself of all his trouble. But that kind of thing greatly depends upon who sits opposite to you in the other cosy arm-chair, or, better still, next you, with hands entwined, whilst hearts are entwining; and Mrs. Henry Treherne, as I have hinted to you before, was not a woman to confide in. Her son greeted her more kindly to-day than was his wont, for with the thoughts

and feelings he had been indulging down-stairs, it would have been difficult for him not to feel kindly towards any one ; but still he would not have told his mother what these thoughts and feelings were, for the world. Any one sooner than her. She was not at all a serious-thinking, or religious woman. She might not have laughed at such disclosures ; but she would not have understood them. She would probably have listened with grave attention, and then told George that it was a great pity he should indulge such moping ideas, and that funerals were horrid things for the spirits ; and that she wished he would go out for a walk, and shake it off. George would sooner have told the first person he met in the street than her. But he had no intention of telling any one ; not even Agnes. It was a secret between himself and the only One to whom there are no secrets. And so it remained.

Mrs. Treherne had a great many questions to ask about the funeral, and the will. "Come and sit down by the fire, George," she said, "and tell me all about it. It's a wretched day for you to have been standing out in that horrid cemetery, my dear ; so damp and cold. Of course Frederick and Robert were there. Did any of the girls go ?"

"No, mother ; none. I was rather glad of it. I

was afraid of having a scene. The will? oh! it was just what you have heard before. William has the Lawn, and a thousand a year; but he is to pay 200*l.* out of it to his mother, during her lifetime. Aunt Lucy has the rest of the money, about 750*l.* a year, I think, which is to be divided at her death amongst the younger children, and also the plate and furniture. But I think it seems rather an unfair division, considering what a number are included, in the 'younger' children."

"It's the usual thing, my dear," remarked his mother. "William will not find his income too much for him, with the Lawn to keep up; and he will have to refurnish it."

"Well, I should think he will scarcely do that until he marries. He ought to let his mother live on there. His income will be ample for himself."

"Oh! he will marry, George; depend upon it. He will find no difficulty in getting a wife soon with the Lawn to receive her in."

"Well, she'll be a happy creature, whoever she is," said George, as he stretched his legs before the fire. "I for one shan't envy her."

"Were not you mentioned in the will?" presently demanded Mrs. Treherne.

"Oh! by Jove, I forgot. Yes; there's fifty pounds

left to Agnes, and the same to me. I'm going to have a fling up in town with mine next week; and you've got a ring, mother. I'm sure I can't remember which it is; but I thought it very kind of the poor old boy to remember us at all, with all his own brats to provide for."

Fifty pounds is not much for a legacy," said Mrs. Treherne; "but, as you say, we had no right to expect anything."

"Oh! it will be enough for my fling next week, and as for Aggie, she must keep hers towards getting her trousseau. I suppose it won't be long first now."

As George made this last remark, there was a visible change in his mother's countenance. Hitherto she had been in one of her best tempers. Her brow had been smooth and unclouded, and her voice pleasant; and you might have imagined, to look at her and hear her speak, that she was the sweetest tempered person imaginable; but you would soon have been undeceived. As George mentioned the probability of his sister's marriage, the wrinkles in her forehead puckered closer together; the lines of her mouth depressed, and then came a spiteful look into her eyes, which to be imagined, ought to have been seen. As she answered, her voice almost seemed to

shake, as the leaves of a tree begin to shiver before the coming storm.

"*That's* not very likely," was all she said.

George had told his friend Digby that this was not a favourable time to press his suit for him, and he was right. Mrs. Henry Treherne had appeared more opposed to the idea of Agnes's engagement lately than ever she had done before. The failure of the prospect of her son becoming a man of wealth and position had soured her considerably, and she was more than ever bent on a rich or influential suitor for her daughter. She felt, instinctively, that George was about to attack her upon this subject now; for she knew that he was all on the side of his sister and her lover, and that in him she had a powerful antagonist to oppose. So she buckled on all her armour for the defence of herself and her cause. He, on his part, might not have engaged in so unprofitable a warfare, to-day of all days, had he not felt so softened himself, that he would have been an easy prey, for any one who wanted to persuade him into anything he was himself opposed to. He forgot that his mother had not been subjected to the same softening influence, and was not even aware that he had been. I am afraid my hero did not show his usual tact on this occasion; but we cannot expect his circumspection to be never at

fault. He did not know how soon his orders for foreign service might not arrive, and he wanted to benefit his friend and his sister before he went, and he dashed at it accordingly.

"Why isn't it likely, mother?" he said, in answer to her last remark. "Digby's ready to marry her any day."

"Mrs. Treherne's eyes quite flashed, as she turned them round upon her daring son; but his eyes, so softly loving where they chose, so steadily defiant when they needed, met her own in a calm, unflinching gaze, before which they rather quailed.

"If you mean Captain Digby, George," she said, "there is my consent to be gained, as well as yours, before that affair can take place."

"Now, mother," said George, wheeling round to face her as he spoke, and comfortably settling himself with one leg over the other, for a long conversation, "I want you to tell me plainly what your objection to this marriage of Digby with my sister is. He is a friend of mine, as you know; and I promised him that I would speak to you about it. It strikes me you are behaving in a decidedly unfair manner in the business; and I, having some voice in it, as his friend and her elder brother, flatter myself I have a right at least to ask on what objection your refusal to sanction

their engagement is founded ; for, hang me, if you haven't a good one, if you shall spoil all their happiness for life, for a mere fancy."

Mrs. Treherne had grown perfectly white with passion, as her son addressed her thus, and at the close of his speech she had hardly any left to answer him with.

"I deny your right!" at last she said, "to ask me any questions on the subject. I have a right to forbid my daughter marrying whom I choose—and I shall not tell you, nor any one, my reasons for so doing!"

"You *will* tell me!" he answered, quietly. "I don't leave this room till you do, and, by Jove, if you hold out longer than I can sit here, I'll never enter these doors again till my sister's Mrs. Digby ; I'll promise you that, and I believe you know by this time whether I'm a man of my word, or not."

She did know it well enough ; even when he was a little boy she had been obliged, times without number, to yield her will to his, for fear lest his indomitable obstinacy, in refusing to eat or drink, unless she did so, should result in harm to himself. As a man, he had swayed her when no one else could—he cared no more for her temper than for a child's fretfulness. She felt his power over her, and that as

usual she must yield. Then she commenced weeping, as she always did when she was beginning to get the worst of it.

"You behave exceedingly badly;" she said, between her tears, "if your poor dear father had lived he would never have allowed you to speak to me in the way you do. You encourage Agnes to be undutiful to me also. You are a bad son, George, a very bad son!"

He had heard the fact so often, it did not seem to affect him much. When she had ended for the time being, her reproaches, he spoke to her again.

"What I want to know is, what is this quarrel between you and Sir Charles and Lady Digby that prevents your receiving their son at your house, as a suitor to your daughter. It must have happened years and years ago—surely, you have got sufficient charity to forget such old scores as that."

"Lady Digby behaved very badly to me," said Mrs. Treherne, in reply; "it is quite needless recounting the reason of the quarrel, as it is not likely to be made up, now."

"But I wish to hear it," reiterated her son, with a stress upon the word "wish."

Mrs. Treherne read in the tone, that it was useless to beat about the bush any longer, so she

seated herself in the opposite arm-chair, and commenced :

"It's not likely you can appreciate the why and the wherefore, George, as it occurred before you were born."

"But I can decide upon the rights or wrongs of it," he said.

"When your father and I first married, he took me to stay at Waltham Priory, where the Digbys lived. I always knew she had been a great friend of your father's, but I did not know until afterwards, that she had been engaged to be married to him, before she had married Sir Charles Digby, or I never would have stayed there. It is not very pleasant for me to have to speak to you against your father, George, but I soon found out that the intimacy between him and Lady Digby had by no means been broken off since their respective marriages."

"Or, you fancied so," put in her son.

"No, sir, I did not fancy so," she answered, working herself up again into a passion : "I knew it for a certainty, and do you think I was going to hold my tongue under the discovery?"

"I understand it all now," said George, "you needn't tell me the rest—you put yourself into one of your delightful tempers, blustered out your fancied

discovery to the whole household, made a quarrel between Sir Charles and my father, and got kicked out of Waltham Priory. A respectable proceeding, altogether !”

And as the young man leant back in his arm-chair with his lips closed, and slightly curved downwards, he certainly did look provokingly contemptuous, and sufficient to excite the anger of any parent. To Mrs. Treherne the sight was perfectly maddening.

“No, we were not ‘kicked’ out, Master George, as you elegantly observe, but there was a regular fracas between Sir Charles and your father, as indeed there was every right to be; and I have never spoken to Lady Digby since, nor will I ever speak to her; and no child of her’s shall be my daughter’s husband.”

This last remark roused George to the fact that he was spoiling his cause, so that his next words were spoken in a much quieter tone.

“But what proofs had you of any improper intimacy between my father and Lady Digby?”

“Proofs! What proofs did I want? couldn’t I see how they were going on, from the way they looked at one another, and all that?”

“A terrible ‘all that,’ no doubt,” answered her son; “what would become of us all, if we were condemned

on such evidence? And did you take your story to Sir Charles, with no more substantiality in it than 'looks, and all that,' to rest upon?"

"It was quite sufficient," she said, sharply.

"And he believed it?"

"He had not heard of the previous engagement, at all. He accused his wife, and she confessed it to him."

"But he believed your story, that the intimacy was continued between my father and Lady Digby?"

"No, that was the reason of the quarrel; he wouldn't believe me, and actually wanted me, I, who was the injured party, to apologize to his wife. I left the house there and then, and have never entered it again, and never will. Nothing should induce me to speak with Sir Charles or Lady Digby again, after their conduct to me, and I repeat that I will not receive Captain Digby at my house, nor sanction his engagement with Agnes. She may be influenced by your bad advice to marry him without my consent; but if she does, I'll never own her as my daughter again."

"You need not be afraid of Agnes being influenced either by me or Captain Digby in this matter, mother. She has too much good taste to wish to enter a family where her mother has made herself

so unpleasantly conspicuous, unless an apology of some sort has been made on your side, to Lady Digby. The fact is this: I understood something of it before, but not so clearly as I do to-day; you grossly insulted Sir Charles Digby's wife, and he refuses to let her call on you, or make friends again, until you have acknowledged that the insult was unfounded. Perfectly right of him, too. I should do exactly the same."

"Of course you would side against your mother," she said in answer.

"I always side, I hope, on the right side. You know perfectly well, now, that you were wrong, that if there had been an engagement of any sort between my father and Lady Digby, it must have been when they were both very young, and there certainly was no wish to carry on such an intimacy afterwards; why, my poor father was devoted to yourself, as everyone who knew him can tell me. There is no doubt that it is your place to make the *amende honorable* to Lady Digby. You would owe it to her under any circumstances, particularly the present ones. I have reason to believe that such a step on your part would be gracefully met half-way on theirs. The question is, do you intend to do what is right or not? That's what I want to know!"

"Do I intend to apologize to Sir Charles and Lady Digby for what took place years ago? No, certainly not; I consider an apology is due to me for the rudeness we were treated with, at the time, and the entire break-up it was to our intimacy. No, never, most certainly not!"

"Not for Agnes' sake, mother, but for mine, think again; you have but two children in the world. Happiness is too seldom attained by any of us; it is a serious thing to destroy another person's, for the sake of our own pride."

"Pride! how dare you speak to me about pride," she said, angrily, "when I tell you it is my place to demand an apology from Lady Digby?"

"But I say it is not," he answered in the same tone. "Now, mother, I give you one more chance. There is no earthly objection to be found in Charles Digby, but this old quarrel of yours with his parents. He is everything desirable, with respect to birth, and fortune, and education, and your daughter loves him. She will be a fool if she doesn't take him, with your consent or without it, and so I tell her constantly; only I'm afraid she is too great a fool to see it in its proper light. Are you determined, then, to ruin her life's happiness, and his too, and through him, perhaps, distress his parents, and through her de-

cidedly distress me, for the sake of indulging your own feelings which prompt you to keep up this quarrel between the families?"

"Let Lady Digby come forward, and say that she wishes the marriage to take place."

"It is not her part to do so, and her husband will not permit it. Allowing you were in the right, mother, couldn't you, for your child's sake, lower your false pride sufficiently to enable you to do, what, after all, would be only your duty, were there no stake upon the non-fulfilment of it?"

Mrs. Treherne's temper had now devolved into sul-
lenness.

"I have told you before that it is not my duty," she said, obstinately.

"You are then *quite* determined, mother?" he asked, as he rose from the chair, and stood by the table.

"Quite," she answered. "I will never apologize to Lady Digby."

"Then good-bye," he said, carelessly, moving towards the door; "you've seen the last of me, unless you alter your determination. I don't enter these doors again, before I go to Canada."

And passing through them as he spoke, she heard him descend the stairs, slam the hall-door, and walk

through the garden-path into the road. She would have given worlds to have called him back and begged him to unsay his words, but her pride forbade her. She knew that if she held out, he could hold out too. She felt that he had spoken truth, that he would go to Canada, and not see her again. Not one kiss, not one look more on that dear face, in which she so gloried, not one farewell word. And this from the only creature she really loved in the world! Mrs. Treherne thought she could not bear it. For a moment, she could have written and told him she would do anything, everything, so that he would only come back and sit in that chair again, and let her hear the tones of his voice, and see the smile which he knew so well how to bestow on those he cared for. And what was it prevented her? What was it that rose up and stayed her hand, when she would have written? The same thing which paralysed her tongue, when she would have called after him—pride; and in its train, that most fearful of tempers to fight against—obstinacy. These two made a compact of arms against Agnes and George; and whilst they threatened to destroy their peace, were certain of doing so for that of the miserable mortal whom they held captive; for there is nothing in this wide world so hard to bear as the misery we create for ourselves,

the wretched tempers which we permit our hearts to cherish, which lie in our bosoms day after day, eating into their very core, turning the healthy current of our life-blood into gangrened waters. However much others suffer from our fostered tempers, depend upon it, no one feels them as we do ourselves. They may make others' lives miserable, but they make our own a hell.

Mrs. Treherne sulked in unhappy silence for many days after this interview with her son. Poor Agnes did not know the immediate cause, but she was too well used to such exhibitions to care to trace its source. She suffered, and was silent. But relief was at hand. Some one else had thought of her; some one else wanted her. George sent her a note to the effect that he had received an invitation from his uncle for both of them to spend Christmas at Ariscedwyn, and had accepted it. The heiress was to come home for the first time, and Mr. Treherne wanted Agnes to be there to welcome her. "Would she be ready by the 10th?"

This note did not give Agnes any surprise. George was used to settle such things, both for her and himself. But would her mother like her to go? Oh, yes! Mrs. Treherne had no objection to offer; was very glad she was not included herself. Had no wish

to see the heiress at all, or any one else either, for the matter of that. Agnes was of no use in the house; she might just as well be out of it, as in it. So Agnes took the sulkily-granted leave joyfully, and made the most of it. When she found herself in the railway carriage, with her dear brother beside her, all affection and attention to her wishes, and a month or six weeks of liberty, stretching out in a lovely vista of peace before her, she felt as if she wanted nothing, not even Charles Digby, to complete her feelings of happiness and relief.

CHAPTER XIX.

ELFRIDA'S FATE IS DECIDED.

ON the 10th of December, the morning of William Treherne's marriage, a gentleman of the name of Williams, who had just arrived from an up-country station, hot and dusty, and half-clothed, bolted without ceremony into Mr. Cameron's room at the Madras Club as he was taking breakfast, and shook him by the hand, before he well knew who his visitor was.

The new comer was a stout, florid-complexioned man, with a merry, good-tempered face, and his only recommendation, a fine set of teeth, which he showed upon every opportunity, and did not keep to himself on the present one, as he laughed at Cameron's surprise at his abrupt entrance and picturesque appearance.

"Holloa, old fellow!" was his salutation. "Don't you remember me? Why, we were at Cuddapah together! Jack Williams, of the 80th."

"To be sure," cried Cameron, as he recognised

him, and returned his shake of the hand. "You must forgive me for not remembering you at first, and in that guise. Why, where have you come from?"

And my English readers, who happily know nothing of Anglo-Indian manners and customs, would not have been surprised at Mr. Cameron's question, could they have seen Mr. Williams's costume, which consisted of a very crumpled shirt, a very tumbled head of hair, and a very unshaven chin, all surmounting a pair of trousers which might be said to be the only garment, worthy the name, which he could boast of.

"Just out of my transit," was the answer. "I've come straight through from Bangalore on sixty days' leave. When did you turn up, Cameron—last steamer?"

"No; a month ago. Didn't you see me in the 'Gazette?' I meant to have stayed another year in England; but the money ran short, so I had to come out again. Have you got a room here?"

"Can't—they're full; so I came to you for a bath and a clean shirt, till my box comes up. They say I shall have a room to-night. There's a Mr. Treherne going to turn out to-day—who's he?"

"Don't you know Treherne of the Civil Service—the Secunderabad business man?"

"Ah! that gentleman? What is *he* doing here?"

"Just came out with me. He's going to be married to-day."

"Never! Who to?"

"A daughter of Dr. Salisbury's—a girl of eighteen, just out from school."

"By Jove!" And the exclamation was followed by a most expressive whistle.

The two men were silent for a while, and sat looking at one another. Then Williams said:

"I say, what about that little affair at Secunderabad, and the Ellore business, eh?"

"I don't know—hushed up, I suppose."

"Does Salisbury know of them?"

"He must; every one does in India. Perhaps Treherne has given out that he's reformed."

"Ah, yes—likely, I should think—very."

But Mr. Williams's tone was so very indicative of unbelief, that it belied his words.

"What kind of a girl is she?" he asked, presently.

"Very pretty, and innocent looking—quite a girl. There are two of them. They came out by the same mail that we did."

"Why didn't you go in for one of them, Cameron?"

This was rather a hard hit for poor Cameron, who had gone in, and had to come out again, unsuccessful.

ful; but he did not show any trace of discomfiture, as he parried the unconscious thrust:

"Ah, well, it's not every nice woman that is to one's own taste, you know, Williams. Treherne was smitten at once, and engaged at Malta. Well, I don't envy her, poor beggar; he'll lead her a nice life before she's done with him."

"Are you going to the marriage?"

"Yes, I am. I got an invitation, and had no reasonable excuse for refusing it, though I hate that sort of thing. It is to be at eleven, at the Cathedral. Come, Williams, I suppose you've got your uniform with you. You had better take a bath, and come with me. She's the prettiest girl that Madras has seen for some time. You won't have such another chance."

"Not much satisfaction, though, in seeing her throw herself away upon a brute like Treherne. Horrid shame! What on earth was old Salisbury about to allow it?"

"Well, I suppose it's too late to alter it now, Williams; so if you wish to be in at the death, you had better begin to dress yourself. Holloa! what's that?" he exclaimed, as the firing of three guns, one after the other, sounded upon his ear. "English mail's in, Williams," he shouted after his friend, who had already entered the bath-room; "we shall have our

letters in an hour;" and sat down to his breakfast, which was laid in the verandah, with a pleased expression on his face. Those at home, who think they will just put off writing their usual letters till "next mail," little think how that mail is watched for—how much pleasure a few loving lines from those left behind can give to the poor exiles abroad, nor how much disappointment is felt by them when no letters come at all. Cameron had been only a couple of months, from England; but it is almost the first few months in which we feel most pleasure in receiving news. We have not yet lost our interest in the places and people we have been associated with. We still care to hear whether Mr. Brown's pheasants have succeeded, or Miss Jones's engagement is likely to be broken off. A year or two later, perhaps, and we shall have no link of memory to connect us with the new scenes and acquaintances which will have shifted themselves into our letters from home. Still, at all times they are most welcome, if only to tell us we are not forgotten in our voluntary but sacrificial exile. I have not related the conversation of those two young men to you as a prologue to working up the incidents they alluded to into any future part of this story. William Treherne's peccadilloes, whatever they were, were past; and, as you will see, he will not have the

opportunity afforded him of sinning in like manner again, nor of having the recollection of them forcibly obtruded on his notice. I have related it, in order that you may understand clearly, in what degree of respect his character was held by those gentlemen who had known him best, and associated with him most, during his career in India. I have endeavoured to bring him before you, as a selfish, unprincipled man, who was a sufficient adept at deception to prevent his faults appearing on the surface. He had made himself thoroughly disliked in India; but the drama he had acted there was well-nigh played out. He will soon be removed for ever to another stage of action. Whether he will comport himself there better than he has hitherto done, remains to be proved. If the deeds that were past and gone ever troubled any one again, it could have been only himself, when his conscience reproached him with them, as he thought over his life; but as far as they concern the story I am telling you, they are done with, for ever. They have only been brought forward, to aid in depicting the man's character. Let them die the unworthy death they deserve!

As William Treherne stood that morning in his own room, waiting for the carriage which was to take him to the church, his servant entered with several

letters which had just arrived for him by the outward mail. Letters from home! He had not many agreeable associations connected with that magic name. He might be said even not to care for any one there. So he took up his letters almost mechanically, and broke the seals simply because it was not yet time to go to church—not because he was anxious for news. The first letter he read, which was from his mother, told him of his father's death, and urged his immediate return to England. The feeling uppermost in the son's mind, as he read this news, was certainly surprise. We know he had no love for his father; but he never thought he would have died so soon. Dead! really dead! And then the Lawn, the income, flashed into Treherne's mind, and the colour flew into his face, and he had almost given an exclamation of delighted surprise at the thought, only he recollected himself in time, and tried to look decorous, even though he was alone. Then he remembered his wedding. Could this news make any difference to it? He thought of Dr. Salisbury's stipulation about Elfrida not being taken from her mother at once, and felt that if it was known he had to return to England directly, the parents might be apt to propose a delay of the marriage, Elfrida herself might accede, or even further such a proposal. He was not

quite sure of her in his mind, you see, even yet. He felt she had been won by unfair means. As the idea of a postponement of the wedding occurred to him, he thrust his letters into his pocket, and the unwelcome thought from his mind, at one and the same moment.

"Hang it," he thought to himself, "why couldn't that steamer have been an hour or two later, and then I shouldn't have got it till we had been to church; any way I shall not say anything about it till afterwards: it will be quite time enough then. There is sure to be such a scene with Mrs. Salisbury, and that fool, Grace. The steamer will be here from Calcutta in four days. By Jove! what a short honeymoon. Won't the maternity be surprised to see me walking home with a wife! Why, I've never told them of my engagement yet. Deuced sharp work altogether. But here's the carriage." The appearance of which stopped Mr. William Treherne's soliloquy, and as he drove towards the Cathedral, I'm afraid the knowledge that there was a letter in his pocket, telling him that his poor father was past ever being hurt again by the selfish negligence and indifference of the son he had reared, tended rather to increase than mar the pleasurable feelings he experienced, on his wedding morning. And whilst the carriage was

rapidly taking the bridegroom to the place of appointment, there was a large party assembled in the bedroom of the bride. Elfrida's eldest sister, Mary, was up the country with her husband and children, many, many miles away from Madras, and with a rough, almost untraversable road between them, to travel down which, would have taken her a month at least, and therefore it was quite out of the question her being at Elfrida's wedding. She had to be content with hearing of all the arrangements from her mother and Grace, and hoping that some good-luck might bring her husband and Mr. Treherne nearer together soon, that she might have the chance of seeing the sister who had been quite a child when last she had parted with her. But there were a great many friends and connections of the Salisburys who had assembled to do honour to the ceremony, and not a few amongst the female sex had begged their way into the bride's room, to superintend the important act of dressing her. That operation was now nearly at an end; the pure white dress was already on; the veil, with its innumerable folds, falling about the braided golden hair, and surmounted by the wreath of orange blossoms and myrtles. Gloves, pocket-handkerchief, fan, and bouquet were lying eady on the table before her, but she still sat

before the looking-glass, where she had been dressed, gazing at the reflection she saw there. It was said of Elfrida Salisbury, that she looked worse on her wedding-day than she had ever done before, and certainly she was very pale, and her eyes were heavy and languid, and she looked very unlike the joyous, bright creature who had hung over the gunwale of the "Nubian" in the bay at Malta, and passed her comments on everything she saw there. And yet they had all been going on very quietly since the engagement had been decided on. Mrs. Salisbury, whatever she had said and done in private, in her daughter's presence had always put a good face upon the matter, and busied herself about the preparations for the marriage as if it had been her most favourite project. Grace had also come to think of it as something inevitable; girls do not generally consider a wedding, as such, a very dreadful fate. She did not like her intended brother-in-law a bit better than she had done at first, but she was willing to believe that since Elfrida liked him well enough to marry him, it must be partly her own fault, and that she should grow to like him better in time; then her sister was not to be parted from her—at least not for some time—and altogether it was not so bad as she had at first anticipated. Dr. Salisbury was not so easy in his mind about his

daughter's caring for the man she was about to marry, as his wife and Grace made themselves. He had observed a good deal; but he often told himself that one person cannot be a judge for another, that he was no longer a young man, and might have forgotten how such things ought to be. Elfrida's apparent indifference might be shyness, William Treherne's exacting selfishness might be excess of love. The fact is, he did not like to think of it as anything else: his wish was father to his thought. In every other respect the match was very desirable; whenever the thought of it came into his head he tried to think of the desirability, and nothing else. He was the only one amongst them all who trembled for Elfrida's happiness. The others thought of their own loss; their sorrow blinded them to the possibility of hers. And the person most interested in the game they were playing, did she never think for herself? I cannot tell you, for if she did, Elfrida told her thoughts to no one. She had been very quiet and subdued since her arrival in Madras. She said it was the unusual heat. Her sister attributed it to the solemnity with which she contemplated the change about to take place in her life. She herself never stopped—she dared not stop—to ask herself why or wherefore she felt thus. She knew at the time of her engagement that she did

not love William Treherne, she had told him so ; she had hinted as much to her sister. Grace was too young and inexperienced herself, to warn Elfrida that the hope she rested on—the hope that she would come to love him, “because all women loved their husbands”—was a frail and treacherous one. Had she been older, she might have done so. Had Elfrida had some other confidant, more versed in the ways of this naughty world, she might have been roused to a sense of her danger. But she had none. She drifted by herself, poor young, mistaken creature, from the calm river of life, in which she had passed her innocent childhood, into the turbulent stream of matrimony, with none to shout to her from the shore, or throw out a rope to which she might cling and be saved.

And so Elfrida had accepted her lot, as fate offered it to her, and had grown pale, and reserved, and at times fretful upon it. Even to Grace, she was not the same that she had been. The little confidences which the sisters had been used to share, from babyhood upwards, had been broken up, and done away with. It is so always, when one heart conceives another and more engrossing love than what has satisfied it hitherto. There must, in consequence, spring up some barrier, however slight, between it and the hearts which have once been its all ; but

in this case it was peculiarly so, because William Treherne was not a favourite of Grace's, and any subject wherewith he was connected, fell flat between her and Elfrida, from the unspoken and yet confirmed knowledge which they each possessed, that he was not liked by the elder sister. So Elfrida and Grace were not what they used to be, and Grace had almost wished that the unfortunate wedding-day was over, having some vague idea, that when the confusion and bustle consequent on it was passed, Elfrida would be herself once more. How little she dreamed that Elfrida would never be the "self" she pictured, when she thought thus, again; that the mad, laughter-loving girl, whose wildness had been the cause of many a grave reproof from the lips of governesses and masters before this, had gone somewhere away, somewhere far back into the past, and would never re-appear again, as Elfrida Treherne. Amongst the ladies gathered in the bedroom, was good-natured Mrs. Canning, who, from her office of chaperone on the voyage out, considered herself almost in the light of a second mother to the bride. She was bustling all about the dressing-table, disarranging things greatly, in her efforts to be useful.

"Now, dear," she said, "are you sure you have got everything. All your bracelets on; yes, I see you

have, but there's no scent on your handkerchief. Grace, pass the eau-de-cologne, my dear. Why, surely, my dear Elfrida, you are going to wear this," she added, taking up the coral bracelet William Treherne had given her at Malta. "The first present Mr. Treherne gave you, and on the day of your engagement, too. Let me put it on this arm for you."

"No, thank you," said Elfrida, gently. "I would rather not; it's so gay looking," and she put the ornament on one side, as she spoke.

"Nothing can be too gay for a bride, my dear. Do you think so, Mrs. Salisbury?" said Mrs. Canning, appealing to that lady, who sat at a little distance, ready for church, and looking like a martyr in her wedding garments. As Mrs. Canning asked the question, she turned herself towards her friend, and her figure not being very sylph-like, or her actions very graceful, she whirled her skirts with her as she turned, and they, in some manner, caught the bracelet, and threw it from the table to the floor. We all know what coral is; it was smashed into fragments at once, and utterly ruined. Mrs. Canning's consternation at the accident, was only equalled by her awkwardness.

"My dear girl," she said, "oh, I am so terribly vexed; how *could* it have occurred? I'm sure I only

turned round to speak to your mamma. I had no idea the bracelet was there. I would have given ten pounds, sooner than smash that bracelet. How very unlucky, and on your wedding-day, too."

Elfrida seemed more amused at her look of horror and her apologies, than at anything that had happened that morning yet. She almost laughed, as she begged Mrs. Canning not to distress herself, and assured her she was not in the least vexed at the accident.

"Oh! my dear, it's very good of you to say so, but I know you must be. His first present, too. If I can get you another, I will; but it will never be the same as that one to you, I know."

Elfrida begged she wouldn't attempt to do any such thing. She would much rather not have another; coral was not a favourite ornament of hers. I think altogether she was rather glad to get rid of it. I am sure the "ill luck" of it didn't trouble her for the moment. Presently there was a stir, and a summons to the carriages. Then Mrs. Salisbury kissed Elfrida, and left her, and the bridesmaids had to be collected and packed, in clouds of white and green drapery, into the vehicles waiting for them. Every one was gone at last, except the bride and her father. Then came their carriage, and he called to her from

the bottom of the stairs to make haste and join him. She rose slowly from her chair, gave one parting look at the pale face, covered with white lace, which looked back upon her from the glass, as if she would say "Good-bye" to Elfrida Salisbury for ever, and took a few steps forward. As she did so, her eyes fell upon the fragments of red coral thrown upon the floor, which were all that remained of the bracelet. *It* was gone, but how much had come of it, how much remained yet to come? As she stepped over it towards the door, her lips parted, and a sound came out of them.

"I scarcely know what it was. It may have been 'My God!' or some exclamation of the sort, but it sounded strange for one so young. Then she lifted her bridal veil hurriedly, passed her handkerchief two or three times over her face, on which a cold perspiration had gathered itself; took her gloves, bouquet, and all the etceteras in her hand, and passed quickly through the chamber she was to inhabit no more, and down the stairs and into the carriage which waited to take her to her fate, without a moment's pause for more thought. As Dr. Salisbury seated himself beside her, he took her hand in his; but she drew it away, almost abruptly, and sat with them both in her lap, until they stopped at the Cath-

hesitated in determining to tell a lie about it, and to pretend to read his letters for the first time, when the wedding guests should have departed; for the heat in India usually prevents a newly-married couple from leaving the paternal roof until the cool of the evening. He was determined to try the feat; but he was rather doubtful how he should feign the surprise and distress he would be supposed to feel on the occasion. However, he left that to chance. As the breakfast ended, and guest after guest left the house, leaving no end of congratulations and good wishes on behalf of the young couple behind them, the family of Dr. Salisbury found themselves, at last, alone again. Then they looked round upon one another, almost inquiringly, as if to ask what on earth they were expected to do next. It was an awkward position to be placed in. The Doctor was the first to try and relieve them from it.

“ We shall have dinner at six, my dear Treherne; after which, I suppose, you will start at once. Don't you think it would be advisable to leave Elfrida, for this afternoon, with her mother and sister; it will, probably, be some little time before they meet again.”

And Elfrida's acquiescence, and her mother's

pleasure in the plan, decided that part of the business at once.

"I suppose you have your English letters?" added the Doctor, to his son-in-law. "The steamer came in this morning; perhaps you were too occupied to notice it," he added, smiling.

"No; I have received some letters; but I've not opened them yet," said Treherne, without a change in his countenance. "If Elfrida is going to pass her afternoon with Mrs. Salisbury, I will beguile the time by reading and answering them. The return mail will leave here on the 14th, I believe."

"Yes; it will," returned Dr. Salisbury. "I wish to employ myself in the same manner; perhaps you will come to my study, Treherne, and sit with me."

"Thank you; I will follow you," was the answer, as the Doctor left him alone. Elfrida had disappeared with her mother and sister. William Treherne esteemed himself lucky to have found such an opportunity of being left to himself. He thrust his hand into his coat-pocket, and drew out the packet of letters. "Confound it!" where was the one in his mother's handwriting? The rest were all there—stop! were they? There were three. He had quite forgotten whether he received four or five. The

present ones were unopened. He turned them over impatiently ; one from Dora—two, looking like duns—where on earth could he have left his mother's ? Perhaps in the room at the club. The events of the morning had been so confused, he had quite forgotten ; what should he do ? He must confess to the Doctor that he had received and opened his letter before starting. No ; hang it ! he couldn't do that ; he had just told him that he had not read them. What difference could one letter make over another ? He could suppose one of the present epistles was his mother's, and act accordingly. It was on the table at the club ; his servant had gone there to pack his things ; he should find it in some of his boxes, doubtless, when he unpacked them. Anyway, the news must be told to the Salisburys, and at once. Only four days, and the steamer started. The distant journey which he had contemplated for a wedding-tour, must be altered, and there was not much time. So William Treherne broke the seal of one of his dunning epistles, rushed once or twice up and down the room ; called out very loud, " My God ! Doctor Salisbury, come here," and ran down the staircase with all the noise he could make. The tumult he created was heard all throughout the Indian-built house. Mrs. Salisbury and her daughters were terrified by it, and

ran out of their private apartments, at the same time that Dr. Salisbury met William Treherne half-way down the stairs, and led him back into the drawing-room for an explanation of the unusual agitation he had displayed.

END OF VOL. I.

